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Urgent: Special Summer Driving Notice

To some, sunglasses are a fashion accessory...

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Drivers' Alert: Driving can expose you to more dangerous glare than any sunny day at the beach can... do you know how to protect yourself?

The sun rises and sets at peak travel periods, during the early morning and afternoon rush hours and many drivers find themselves temporarily blinded while driving directly into the glare of the sun. Deadly accidents are regularly caused by such blinding glare with danger arising from reflected light off another vehicle, the pavement, or even from waxed and oily windshields that can make matters worse. Early morning dew can exacerbate this situation. Yet, motorists struggle on despite being blinded by the sun's glare that can cause countless accidents every year.

Not all sunglasses are created equal. Protecting your eyes is serious business. With all the fancy fashion frames out there it can be easy to overlook what really matters—the lenses. So we did our research and looked to the very best in optic innovation and technology.

Sometimes it does take a rocket scientist. A NASA rocket scientist. Some ordinary sunglasses can obscure your vision by exposing your eyes to harmful UV rays, blue light, and reflective glare. They can also darken useful vision-enhancing light. But now, independent research conducted by scientists from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory has brought forth ground-breaking technology to help protect

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EDITOR'S LETTER

T

THE MOMENT I LAID EYES ON THE

itinerary, the line “hot lap of Le Mans in an Audi RS3” jumped off the page. I figured I’d be rocketed around Circuit de la Sarthe by someone like Audi’s Tom Kristensen, the recently retired

nine-time 24 Hours of Le Mans champ and the grand marshal of the 83rd running of the world’s most famous endurance race. That alone would have been sick enough. Instead, I’m standing in the Dunlop Bridge’s shadow, about to hop into the driver’s seat of a brand-new RS3 Sportback. Alone. My heart pounds in anticipation, and with more than a little trepidation. Please don’t let me spin it off into the gravel.

As we told you in last month’s issue, the RS3 Sportback is Audi’s new devilishly fast, delightfully composed hot hatch. We won’t get the Sportback in the U.S., but it’s likely we’ll get a sedan version with the same 367-hp, 2.5-liter turbo inline-five underhood. Good. America needs more killer sport compacts like the RS3, which should prove stiff competition for the BMW M235i and Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG.

We’re ushered to a staging area where several RS3s await. Marshals are cleaning up a big crash at the Porsche curves, so the real racers’ qualifying session is red-flagged. (Note to self: Watch out for that section.) We mill about and check out the cars as night creeps up on the circuit. Suddenly an Audi R8 safety car appears, lights pulsing and flashing. It’s go time. No warm-up, no in or out lap. One lap, 8.47 miles around one of the world’s most legendary circuits.

As I strap on my helmet, I try to frame a mental picture of the track layout, but it’s no use—my adrenaline is spiking, and I’m now absorbed in getting a sense of the RS3’s snug sport seats and thick, flat-bottomed wheel as I set it up for my tastes. We fire up the cars and listen to them spit and blat. I flick the shifter into Sport mode; I’ll work the paddles around the 38-turn track.

The RS3 caravan launches, and we immediately dump off into the Tertre Rouge section, one of the more challenging sets of turns. Just keep it on the tarmac, Floyd. Remember, the tires are cold. As we roll onto the Mulsanne Straight, I’m pushing the RS3 past 120 mph when I suddenly see them in the rearview: two Le Mans prototypes—equipped with passenger seats for VIPs—coming up way too fast. This was most definitely not on the itinerary. I swing to the right, and they blow past, engines wailing madly. Whoa.

We wind our way around the track to the Porsche curves, where a support vehicle is still at the scene as yellow flags wave. I get back on the gas as we approach the main grandstand and pit lane. It’s the most surreal part of the



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LAPPING LE MANS

experience: Le Mans is buzzing with activity and spectators, and maybe even a few of them are watching us. Just like that, it’s over, the most amazing six minutes of my career.

My lap was puny, however, compared with what friend and frequent *Automobile* contributor Jason Harper experienced during the same weekend. He competed in the Michelin Aston Martin Le Mans Festival event in a Vantage GT12 boasting nearly 600 horsepower, in a 40-car field with co-driver and Aston CEO Andy Palmer. Harper’s driven around many tracks, but competing on this level was a new experience for him, as was the immensity of Le Mans.

“Driving the Circuit de la Sarthe was like nothing I’ve ever done before,” Harper said. “Like the Nürburgring, it’s just so long that you can’t really imagine it until you actually do it. The Mulsanne Straight is 3.7 miles long and just so narrow, but at 180 mph it doesn’t really take that long. It’s the Porsche curves that really get you. You’re just going so fast, and the walls close in, and the margin for error is small. During our race, there must have been a half-dozen crashes. And that was just in 45 minutes!”

Harper put in a couple of laps in anger before he went off into the gravel, and we’ve been affectionately calling him “gravel boy” ever since. (Only because we love you, man.) I was in the pits when he came back in. Despite the mishap, he was ecstatic. Big hugs all around. The man just raced at Le Mans, the drive of a lifetime.

There are moments in every auto enthusiast’s life when you experience something special like Harper and I did at Le Mans. Maybe it was the time you dominated at the local autocross or when you topped the charts at a racing school. Your first podium during a real race. Or that day on a stretch of road where you made some magic.

I’d love to hear about your greatest memory behind the wheel. Let me know at letters@automobilemag.com. ■

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Georg Kacher



Meet the next Volkswagen Golf GTI

An
all-time
favorite
should
be
better
than
ever



A

bout four years from now, not long after the eighth-generation Volkswagen Golf debuts, expect to see yet another version of our oh-so-beloved GTI. Sources say the front-wheel-drive hot hatch will be 50 to 100 pounds lighter than today's GTI, and although it won't be a completely new car but an evolution of the existing GTI, it will get major upgrades to its electronic systems and powertrain.

A 300-hp, 2.0-liter turbocharged inline-four—in other words, the present Golf R engine—is the only engine approved for the eighth GTI. Supposedly both a narrow-angle V-6 engine and a high-output hybrid powertrain are still on the table, but seeing either make it to production is doubtful.

Assuming the GTI gets an inline-four, it'll have a standard six-speed manual transmission bolted to it.

Available options will include a dual-clutch automatic transmission, adaptive suspension dampers, bigger brakes, brash aerodynamic aids, and an electronic limited-slip differential. The lower and wider GTI will sit on a longer wheelbase and have a more rakish windscreen, a taller beltline, and shorter overhangs. Familiar styling cues, such as wide C-pillars and characteristic cutlines, will be accented by fresh

touches including LED headlights and a half-dozen optional cameras.

An improved infotainment system with upgraded connectivity will join interior mainstays—red-and-black stripe work, a golf-ball shift knob, and tartan plaid upholstery. An optional fully digital instrument panel and a large center-console touchscreen will have access to mobile Internet and will likely mix voice and gesture control. ■

BUT WAIT... IT GETS BETTER

The GTI will precede two other high-performance, all-wheel-drive Golfs: a 350-hp Golf R and a 400-hp Golf RS. Both will retain the GTI's basic 2.0-liter inline-four engine, but they'll be fitted with two turbochargers instead of one. The RS should get an electronic boost system as well.



8

GENERATIONS OF GTI



Mk I: The first Golf GTI, a 1983 model, made up for its weak 90-hp engine by having a nimble chassis and low curb weight.



Mk II: A few years into its run, the second-gen GTI got a 16-valve, 1.8-liter inline-four engine and a 33-hp bump. Displacement soon grew to 2.0 liters, output hit 134 hp, and we were absolutely smitten by the GTI.



Mk III: The third GTI debuted in 1995 with a 172-hp narrow-angle V-6 engine. Powerful and melodious, yes, but also heavy, unsettling the car's balance.



Mk IV: A light-but-powerful turbo-four could be had when the fourth-gen GTI debuted, but the car had become softer and less amusing, aimed more toward mainstream buyers.



Mk V: Something marvelous happened. The fifth GTI debuted with a 200-hp, turbocharged inline-four and felt as lively as the early GTI without erasing all of the mid-'90s refinement.

Mk VI: VW basically reskinned the charming fifth-generation car for the GTI's sixth time 'round, which didn't bother us at all.



Mk VII: The current, seventh-gen Golf GTI is built on a lighter, stronger platform (MQB) and has more horsepower and torque than its predecessor. It's absolutely fantastic.



Mk VIII: The eighth-generation GTI will follow the sixth-gen's formula—new metal, new features, but little else. Simply put, the GTI should be better than ever.

A SMART-SIZED AUDI WITH A DUCATI ENGINE? YES, PLEASE.



Audi has wanted another

so-called city car since discontinuing the Euro-only A2 in 2005, but building one isn't easy. After a decade-long trail of squashed proposals, Volkswagen Group's product strategy commission scoffed last year at Audi's latest attempt, allegedly calling it little more than a VW Up! adorned with Audi glam.

Disappointed but not disheartened, Audi started on yet another ultra-compact show car, now scheduled to debut in Paris in 2016. Audi originally planned to equip the car with a 200-hp, 1.2-liter, two-cylinder longitudinal V-twin engine from the Ducati 1199 Panigale superbike (Ducati in turn would get to strip down the city car and turn it into a "naked" two-seat roadster, not unlike the

KTM X-Bow); unfortunately the man pushing that program forward, Ferdinand Piëch, just left the building.

It's more likely now that if this new city car can break Audi's bad luck streak and make it to production, it will be built on new MQB-based architecture rather than the very basic NSF (New Small Family) components set from the Up! car. Chances are it would be available with a three-cylinder engine—either a 110-hp gasoline engine or a 100-hp diesel engine—or an all-electric powertrain. This sounds far more boring than a superbike engine, so let's hope post-Piëch management keeps the original project alive. Even if it survives, don't expect to see a production-ready Audi city car much before 2020. —GK ■

THE TALE OF THE

2016 EQUINOX

AS TOLD FROM THE SAFETY OF THE DRIVER'S SEAT.

We sat down with engineer and all-around safety whiz Dennis Kazensky and seating guru Doug Bertoia to talk about safety technology and smart seating that not only helps keep us safer, but also more comfortable.



Preproduction model shown. Actual production model may vary. Available Fall 2015.



DENNIS KAZENSKY

CHEVROLET GLOBAL SYSTEMS LEAD – ACTIVE SAFETY ENGINEER

Do you think available active safety features are helping drivers become more aware on the road?

Absolutely. In fact, we design our available advanced active safety features to encourage good driving behavior, such as getting drivers to look toward the crash threat. For example, in the 2016 Equinox, we put the new available Side Blind Zone Alert on the exterior side mirrors so drivers can conveniently check for both alerts and approaching traffic outside their blind zones.

How do you determine the best way to alert the driver?

Alert design depends on several factors, including how often an alert occurs, the urgency of the crash situation and driver acceptance. For example, the Side Blind Zone Alert, offered in the 2016 Equinox, is visual only because drivers commonly experience

blind spot threats when they're already monitoring the road for that situation. On the other hand, we designed the available Rear Cross Traffic Alert in the 2016 Equinox to be more attention-getting – since these situations are less frequent and may not even be visible to the driver in crowded parking situations or driveways with side obstructions. So if crossing traffic is detected when backing up, left- or right-side audible alerts are presented to let the driver know where the traffic is coming from. In addition, red caution triangles with directional arrows appear on the rear vision camera screen so the driver can easily check what is going on behind them. We conduct careful research with drivers before preparing features for production, which is paying off, as consumer surveys indicate owners love these features.

“We design our available advanced active safety features to encourage good driving behavior.”

Dennis Kazensky

CHEVROLET GLOBAL SYSTEMS LEAD – ACTIVE SAFETY ENGINEER



DOUG BERTOIA

CHEVROLET TECHNICAL LEAD – SEAT SYSTEMS ENGINEER

How did you design the Multi-Flex® sliding rear seat and what were some of the challenges?

Equinox introduced the Multi-Flex sliding rear seat to adapt to a wide variety of different cargo and passenger needs. It definitely had its challenges when it was developed. We weren't able to utilize the center rail that attaches the seat to the underbody structure and supports the passenger weight because it would interfere with the seat's sliding functionality. In order to execute a full-width cushion with the forward and rear sliding feature, we had to manage the weight of the occupants through the seat structure without the center rail. We solved this by distributing the load to the outer sides of the seat.

What materials do you use when designing a seat and how do you test them?

Engineering a vehicle seat requires us to test a wide range of materials: the urethane foams that you sit on, various metals, electrical components and safety belt pretensioners, to name a few. Soft materials, like foam, have traditionally been very challenging to test. However, with the help of a new technology, Finite Element Analysis, we can now digitally simulate soft materials to help design seats that are structurally supportive and comfortable. It's exciting to be able to apply groundbreaking technology to help us engineer the seats of the future.



Safety features are no substitute for the driver's responsibility to operate the vehicle in a safe manner. The driver should remain attentive to traffic, surroundings and road conditions at all times. Read the vehicle Owner's Manual for more important safety information.

HOW TO MAKE BIOETHANOL

The fermentation process uses the same yeast that helps produce bread and beer. Microorganisms eat sugar and excrete ethanol. Since these little guys can't process sugar's calories very well, the ethanol is chemically rich in energy. The conversion from sugar to bioethanol is straightforward, but sources of sugar can be hard to find. Starches such as corn are relatively easy to come by and convert into sugars, but bioethanol's future could also lie with waste biomass, which uses cellulose from wood or grass clippings, or small algae ponds, which produce huge amounts of carbohydrates that can be converted.

WHY YOU'LL (PROBABLY) NEVER PUMP BIOETHANOL

The big problem with food as a fuel source is, as any bachelor knows, it rots if you try to store it too long. Its energy value degrades during this process, says Robert C. Brown, director of the Bioeconomy Institute at Iowa State University. Add to that the fact that bioethanol is only about 70 percent as energy dense as unleaded gas and that it's bulkier than crude oil, which translates to higher transportation costs. But Brown hasn't given up hope: "It took the petroleum industry a century to get to a point where we have a multitrillion-dollar system to make and distribute gasoline."

The yeast-driven fermentation process breaks one part sugar, or glucose ($C_6H_{12}O_6$), into two parts ethanol (CH_3CH_2OH) and two parts carbon dioxide (CO_2).

Michael Frank

Foods that give you fuel

From your fridge to your gas tank, bioethanol could be the energy source of the future

The exhaust fumes coming from Oregon-based Matt Coffman's 25-year-old, 860-hp Nissan 240SX drift car smell like brownies and maple syrup. Last year, Coffman's team started using ethanol instead of gasoline—not the widely used corn-based kind, but bioethanol from food waste.

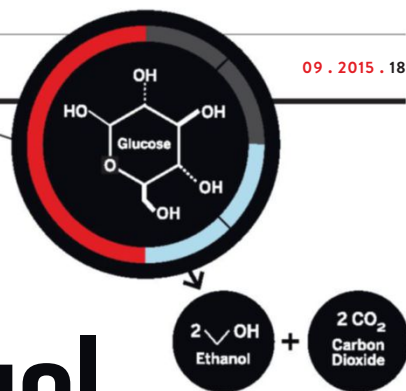
The change came about because a store near the team's shop, Summit Foods, had an expensive problem. Summit sold dried-fruit confections to candymakers, but the disposal of excess sugary liquid, a side effect of drying fruit, cost them upward of \$30,000 a month. "You can't just pour that down the drain," says David McCoy, head of Summit's newly formed fuels subdivision, Summit Natural Energy, which turns leftover sugar and other carbohydrates into bioethanol.

Excess waste is an expensive, industry-wide issue that affects podunk mom 'n' pop shops, McDonald's, and everyone in between. Once Summit figured out what to do with its by-product, it started taking in expired items being offloaded by other nearby manufacturers and

stores. "Pie filling, outdated syrups, doughnut mix—those kinds of things," McCoy says. Americans waste 40 percent of all the food we produce—36 million tons in 2012, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Having plenty of waste to work with, Summit's new business saw great success, so much so that the company spun off a performance-fuel division. Thunderbolt Racing now supplies bioethanol fuel to some 30 race teams, including Coffman Racing.

"It's long been part of our philosophy to be environmentally conscious, but motorsports is inherently environmentally impactful," says the team's manager, Jeff Mailley. "What these guys do to reduce waste and make a stable, consistent fuel attracted us. There's lower consumption and emissions, and we saw a noticeable power bump after we changed over."

Your car won't run on bioethanol anytime soon, if ever, but the fuel could become more common in motorsports applications. You'll be watching a car drifting or doing a burnout, and you'll catch a whiff of last week's lunch. ■



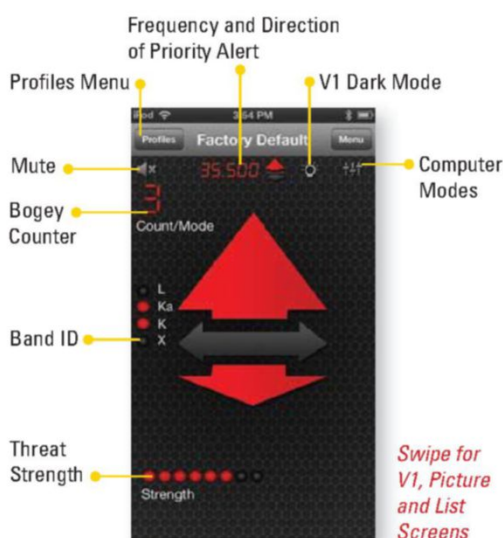
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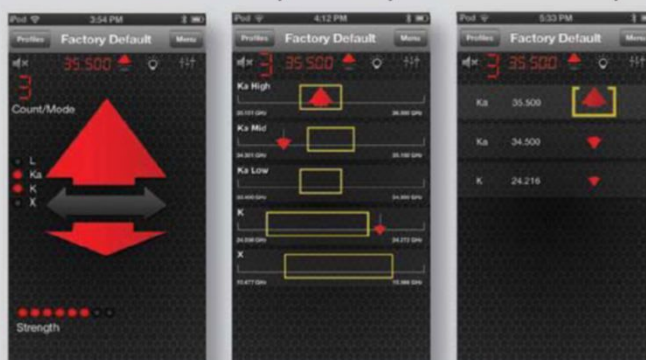
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WINNING BY LOSING AT LE MANS

THE FRONT-WHEEL-DRIVE NISSAN GT-R LM NISMO DIDN'T FARE WELL AT THE 24 HOURS OF LE MANS—OR DID IT?

Some race cars inspire love. Others generate hate. Nissan's GT-R LM NISMO does both. It couldn't be more polarizing if it were a nuclear-powered, transgender cyborg engineered to perform Masses and abortions on alternating weekends.

Created by the same team of contrarians who developed the equally provocative DeltaWing, the Nissan is an unapologetic "eff you" to a half-century of race-car convention, featuring a seemingly obsolete front-engine layout and relying on front-wheel drive.

"When you do the same thing as everybody else, it's easy to come up with reasons why a car didn't work—not enough time, not enough budget," Ben Bowlby, the car's creator, said in early June, a few days before qualifying for the 24 Hours of Le Mans. "When you step outside the box, if you say you can do something, you'd better do it. Otherwise, you're discredited. So I hardly ever have a good night's sleep."

Bowlby has been showered with love from fans, on social media, and in the non-automotive press. But in Le Mans' media center and garages, the Nissan with a cartoonish long nose and narrow rear tires was the subject of scathing commentary. "An ugly shitbox," said one rival. "A technical disgrace," scoffed another. Said a third, "The front suspension is all wrong, and I

don't think a smaller rear contact patch is the way to go." But the biggest gripe about the unproven LMP1 car was the disconnect between Nissan's large-scale public-relations blitz and its pathetic on-track performance. Nissan's three prototypes were 20 seconds off the pace of the class-leading Porsches. "Is racing now just a marketing tool?" a critic asked contemptuously. "If I had a car as slow as that, I wouldn't go racing; I'd go testing."

However, Nissan's global motorsports chief Darren Cox held his ground. "It hurts that we're not faster, but we wouldn't have built three cars if this was just a marketing effort," he said defiantly. "I'm glad people are pissed off at us. If we're doing such a good job [generating publicity] running at the back, it just shows what a bad job they're doing when

they're winning."

In designing the GT-R LM, Bowlby and chief engineer Zack Eakin realized that since the rules for Le Mans (and Formula 1 and IndyCar) are written for conventional mid-engine layouts, there are virtually no regulations restricting aerodynamic innovation on the front of a car. With the engine mounted in front of the cockpit, they were able to create large tunnels to channel air under the chassis and reduce drag. The engine puts weight on the front wheels, meaning more traction for the tires to harness the twin-turbo V-6's power. An off-the-shelf energy recovery system (ERS) should have boosted total output to well past 1,000 hp, but it didn't work as advertised and Nissan raced with a deficit of several hundred horsepower. The

The Nissan team cheers after its No. 22 GT-R LM NISMO, one of its three prototype cars at Le Mans, sees the checkered flag.



hybrid system's weight acted like a boat anchor, and the lack of regenerative braking compromised the overworked front rotors.

Problems bedeviled the Nissans. One car missed the race's start with a clutch-adjustment issue. Another hit an unidentified non-flying object at more than 200 mph, shredding the splitter and ripping off the front clip. By Sunday morning, one GT-R LM was out and the other two were regularly visiting the garage for repairs. Race engineer Ricardo Divila, a veteran of nearly 30 Le Mans campaigns, remained unperturbed. "Once you reach the halfway point, you're in zombie territory," he said. "Short of a silver bullet, nothing can kill you."

Amazingly, the GT-R LMs lapped faster after 20 hours

than they did during qualifying. A second car died tantalizingly close to the finish, but the third one reached the checkered flag, though it was 153 laps behind the race-winning Porsche 919 Hybrid. Eakin, standing on the pit wall with the rest of the exhausted crew, led the cheers. "We worked so hard to build three cars that not getting one of them home would have been really depressing," he said.

For Nissan, Le Mans was what Divila called "a full-scale dress rehearsal." Cox insisted two cars will enter the rest of this year's FIA World Endurance Championship races, though the ineffective ERS means they won't be competitive. "What's the point of 2015? It's 2016," an upbeat Bowlby said. "I haven't put this much effort into this project just so we could suck at the back of the field." ■

FORD GT GOES BACK TO FRANCE



In 2016, 50 years after Ford GTs finished 1-2-3 in the world's premier endurance race, Ford will return to Le Mans with a racing version of its new GT supercar in hopes of waxing Ferrari, Porsche, Aston Martin, and Corvette in the uber-competitive GTLM class. Multimatic Motorsports in Canada will build and develop the car,

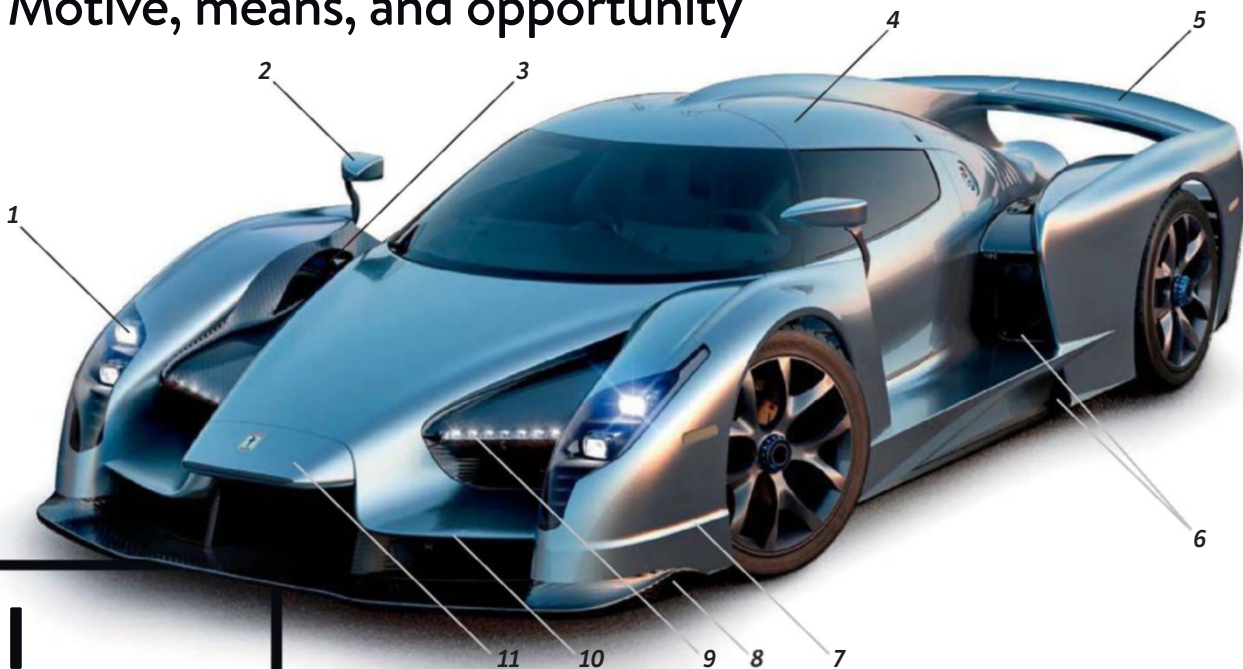
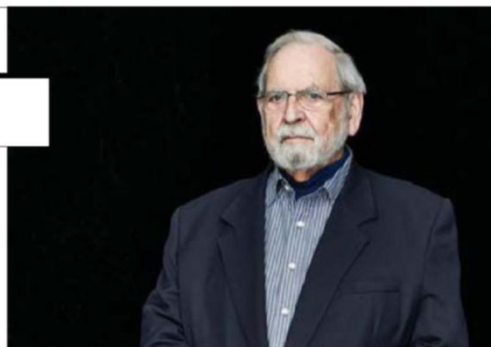
which will have a race-spec 3.5-liter, twin-turbo V-6. Chip Ganassi Racing will run separate two-car teams in the Tudor United SportsCar Championship and in the FIA World Endurance Championship. All four Ford GTs will compete at Le Mans next June. Maybe the new GT will make some racing history of its own. —PL

"I'M GLAD PEOPLE ARE PISSED OFF AT US. IF WE'RE DOING SUCH A GOOD JOB [GENERATING PUBLICITY] RUNNING AT THE BACK, IT JUST SHOWS WHAT A BAD JOB THEY'RE DOING WHEN THEY'RE WINNING."



GLICKENHAUS SCG 003

Motive, means, and opportunity



f we possessed the three elements in the headline above, most of us would probably do what Jim Glickenhaus has done: Make our own example of the kind of car we'd like to drive. The financier and former movie director is as serious an enthusiast as anyone in the car world, and his motivations are solid. He has the means and the opportunity, primarily because he doesn't spend all of his time chasing even more means. Instead, Glickenhaus enjoys his family, his refined car collection (including the earliest known Ferrari), and pursuing his passions. One of them is driving race-bred sports cars on the road. And we all benefit because he's generous about sharing his cars with the world.

I have long thought that the appearance gap between road

and racing sports cars has grown far too wide. Today's Porsche Boxster is much closer to the 1953 Paris show 550 Spyder than to current racing Porsches. But then, who'd want a road car as inelegantly shaped as Porsche's 919 Le Mans cars? No doubt there are excellent engineering reasons for their physical brutality, but you wouldn't want to be seen in one at the club. If two adults could actually shoehorn themselves into the tiny cabin, they'd both be terribly uncomfortable.

Glickenhaus seemingly agrees that ideal modern sports cars should have some visual relationship to racers but not be as severely compromised as Le Mans prototypes. His first venture into making his own car, as opposed to retired racers he has modified for the

road—Lola T-70, Ford GT40 Mk II, et al—was the Ferrari P4/5 (“By Design,” November 2006), a reshaped Enzo executed by Pininfarina. It's both beautiful and historically relevant, unlike the similarly reskinned but unrelated McLaren X-1, a woeful pastiche of disparate ideas.

This newest Glickenhaus design is meant to be driven on the road and to race. It has done both, running at the Nürburgring 24 Hours this year as a 003C (competizione), then stripped of racing paraphernalia and driven to the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este in 003S (stradale) trim. Thus, its intended purpose is like Ford's rather similar new twin-turbo V-6-powered GT. Both vehicles have fairly wide cabins and windshields, and

they taper inward radically toward the tail, close to the natural form of a raindrop. Both appear to have comfortably habitable interiors, and both have been designed to have aesthetically agreeable exteriors while respecting all the constraints of modern racing requirements.

In the road-going SCG 003 you see here, five discrete forms—the passenger power pod and four aerodynamic wheel coverings—are placed on a platform then tied together with various wings and flaps. It is all quite functional and genuinely beautiful in the way racing Ferraris and Maseratis used to be. And it has the added virtue of being sized properly (similar to, say, a Ferrari Dino), which is another altogether admirable Glickenhaus intent.

FRONT 3/4 VIEW

1. The headlamps are ultra high-tech, and they're not even round. But the transparent fairings are carefully crafted to follow the fender surface form. Just like a Ferrari 40 years ago.
2. Are these awkward-looking constructs mirrors or just lenses for the rear-vision cameras? Or are they required by archaic laws? Rear vision is electronic in any case.
3. Yes, those are big holes on the insides of the front fenders, a way to release brake heat.
4. The domed, low-drag roof is the most beautifully sculpted part of the entire body.
5. The rear wing's gentle arc is not bad for beauty, either.
6. Air enters for engine cooling, above, and brake cooling, below. And the sides of the raindrop central pod are elegantly exposed.
7. A delicate touch: This little ridge lines up with the hard line of the sill boxes between the front and rear fender forms.
8. Is this turn-up functional or purely aesthetic? Doesn't matter really. It looks good.
9. Daylight running/recognition lamps fill the rounded leading edge of the catwalks that join the fender and body shapes—and provide still more air inlet area.
10. The sharp leading edges of this winglike surface describe a hat section

between the front fenders.

11. The nose's plug-in leading edge finishes out the body form.

REAR 3/4 VIEW

12. Elegantly sculpted little flow-straightening ribs top all four fenders.
13. Looking like something Carrozzeria Castagna might have done in the '20s, the curved louvers are both effective and pretty. And a lot of work to make.
14. The FIA-style shark fin that touches the rear wing on its centerline has an exceptionally graceful profile, not just a dumb straight line.
15. Rear lamps are specific to the SCG 003 model, elegant but expensive to tool.
16. This hard line describes a different hat section across the tail, but the effect is similar to the front end.
17. Exhaust is direct, simple, and far superior aesthetically to the outlets of Glickenhaus' P3/4.
18. All of the underbody aerodynamic shaping at the rear is direct and simple as well. The multiple horizontal blades at the outer edges are particularly attractive.
19. In contrast to the specially shaped taillights, the side markers are quite ordinary.
20. This hanging blade shape has become a styling commonplace on many cars in the last few years, starting with models such as the BMW i8 but showing up on four-doors as well. It looks right here.



21. This little inset of the leading edge of the rear fenders with respect to the platform on which the body is based is quite nice, a professional styling touch you wouldn't see on a pure race car—unless it was designed in Italy.

23. Rear vision provided by these color screens is infinitely better than looking at mirrors.

24. Colored lights and little twist switches. How could an interior be more serious than this?

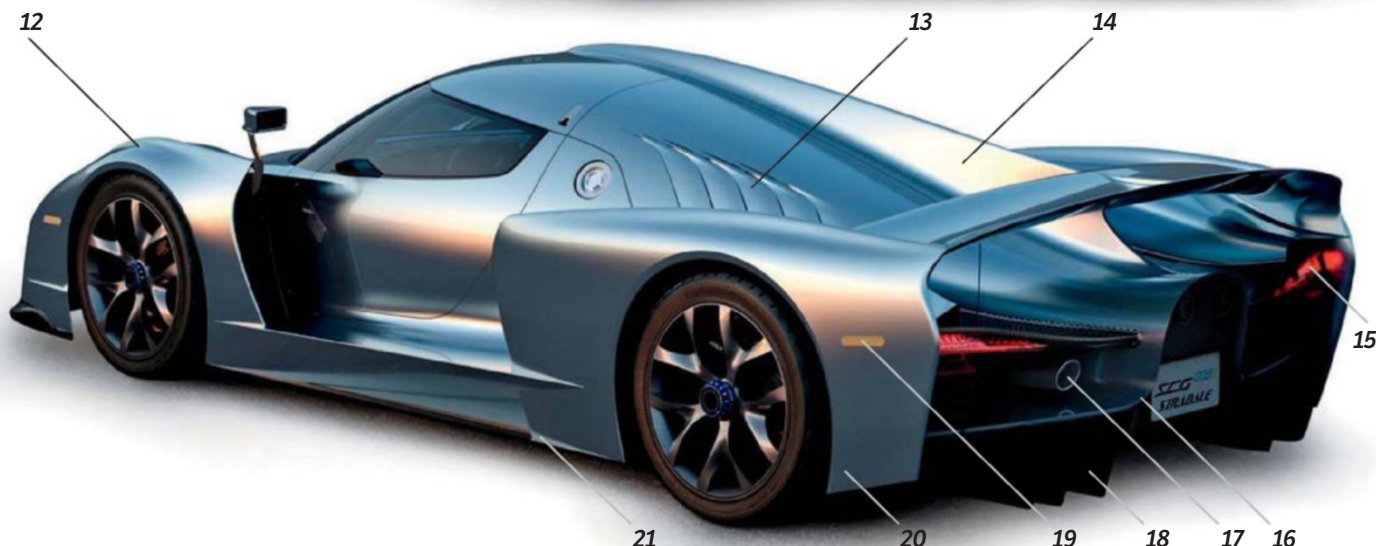
25. This pictogram of the car must be helpful to the driver, but the information conveyed is not obvious.

26. These production-quality outlets provide plenty of ventilation. ■

INTERIOR VIEW

22. This interior includes the removable rollcage structure, which interferes somewhat with visibility and is best left uninstalled for road use.

The purity and beauty of the profile come through in this view of the SCG 003, which shows the Learjet-like cockpit glazing.



WHEN PIGS FLY



F

LYING CARS ARE IN THE AIR

again. That is, if you believe the mainstream media's latest round of breathless headlines ("Flying Car Companies Aim for Takeoff in 2017," gushed CNN recently) and the silly notion that a machine can be both

aircraft and automobile at the same time.

Not that I don't wish it were true. I *want* a flying car. I also want a jet pack as user-friendly as a Honda Civic, a personal submarine that folds into a briefcase, and a world-class pepperoni pizza that reverses graying hair. And by now, damn it, I *should* have a flying car. I mean, ever since I was a kid, inventors, visionaries, and charlatans have been promising that "very soon" I'd be zipping around the sky in a fabulous gravity-defying pod that lifts me off from my driveway, whisks me straight to my destination, and lands me softly on a barstool. Instead, in 2015, I have a phone that talks on its own and orbiting space satellites that keep trying to beam "Duck Dynasty" into my family room.

Part of the problem is simple semantics. When most dreamers talk of "flying cars," what they really mean is "driving planes." Almost every flying car ever built—from Robert Fulton's 1946 Airphibian (an aluminum car with detachable fabric wings) to the sleek, folding-wing prototypes now being developed by Slovakian maker AeroMobil and Massachusetts-based Terrafugia—is actually a plane with a modicum of roadworthiness. You still need a runway to take off and land (not very helpful when you're trying to hop over to Madison Square Garden for the big game). Nor can you really drive your "car" once on the ground: In a crash test, a vehicle light enough to be airworthy would fare about as well as a Ming vase. Even if flying cars are able to meet government regulations, anything that flies will always be exceptionally vulnerable. In a car, a fender bender is annoying. In an aircraft, with its fragile control surfaces and mission-critical shapes, well, you're grounded.

Besides, what a flying-car hopeful really wants is something more akin to a helicopter. Vertical takeoffs and landings with no massive supporting infrastructure needed. Something along the lines of inventor Paul Moller's M400 Skycar, a four-rotor machine designed to take off straight up and then, by tilting its rotors, thrust forward like an airplane. Trouble is, after some 40 years of work and roughly \$200 million of investor cash burned, the Skycar has yet to climb out of ground effect (that's a scientific term for "not even as high as Portland's Paul Bunyan statue"). Still, one can't help but admire a man who so brilliantly combines the tenacity of a carpenter ant with the chutzpah of P.T. Barnum.

Here's the saddest reality of all: Building a working flying car is the easy part. Many flying-car prototypes—from the vintage Airphibian to Terrafugia's new Transition—have indeed flown. But thus far, they've only been in the air with experienced test pilots at the controls. I spent more than



eight months of intensive training and study before earning my private pilot's license, and even that only allowed me to fly relatively simple fixed-wing aircraft in good visual conditions. That's because operating a machine in three dimensions—along with potentially tens or hundreds of other machines occupying roughly the same space—is a complex affair. You're controlling not just speed and direction but altitude, too. You're in frequent radio contact with various ground controllers (and sometimes other aircraft) to maintain separation and proper position. You're constantly vigilant of the weather. And you're always monitoring a slew of systems—from navigation to fuel to engine performance—that in case of a problem can't be fixed simply by pulling to the side of the road. These are not the sort of challenges a teenager masters after a week at Ned's Thrifty Flying Car Driving School.

I'm not saying the dream is impossible. After all, mankind advanced from the first powered airplane flight to landing on the moon in just 66 years. But flying cars are not going to become a reality in 2017, or probably in 2027, for that matter. Massive advances in powerplants, flight controls, automated systems, and computer guidance will be required. Only when the world is safe from Biff and Buffy dreamily text-messaging in the cockpits of their Air Camrys will cars ever really fly. Meanwhile, I'm betting pigs get there first. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM MARRS



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THE INTERNET OF CARS



I T USED TO BE THAT IF YOU AS AN obsessive car fan were unable to squeeze enough existential meaning out of the monthly car magazines you read, you were reduced to satisfying your insatiable car lust—a shame that should not have been named but prob-

ably was, in all its minute and tedious detail, to anyone who would listen—by poring feverishly over classified ads in a local newspaper. Perhaps when you weren't boring friends, relations, and total strangers with your findings, you reread back numbers of *Hemmings Motor News* to see what tasty motoring morsels were out there in classified ad land. New, old, and in between, minty prizewinners to abject crust buckets, you didn't care. These were cars you might buy or more accurately dream about buying.



You can still do all that, it's true. And you can still talk to yourself about cars while talking to others who don't care about cars ... about cars. But to be fair these are essentially interior monologues, which is to say they are inferior monologues, isolating and lonely, unrequited expressions of fantasy that mostly percolate in your own head before limply fizzling,

only to be recycled at a later date by your restless imagination or perhaps to be replaced by another delusional vision of a possible automotive future you think you might theoretically enjoy but which again no one else cares about and which will probably never happen anyway.

Just a few short years ago, if one so afflicted came across a good deal on an interesting or offbeat car, he might be satisfied if he could phone up a similarly inclined buddy and tell her or him all about it. But basically, you and your imaginary quarry were on your own.

Well, thanks to the Internet, that's not the case anymore. If the online world hasn't already become a central component of your car addiction, you're clearly not trying hard enough. Because the sad—or is it happy?—truth is the thing Al Gore invented makes it easier to be a car bore today than it ever was. And you'll never be alone. As I realized today while engaging in some lively banter on the Morris Minor LCV (for Light Commercial Vehicle) page on Facebook, the Internet truly has made the world smaller, allowing far-flung automotive geeks—joiners, loners, and the saddest closet cases—to come together in a kind of instant call-and-response unit. We're talking comradely psychic gratification of the permanently available sort, stuff that being a dedicated club member alone—say, an Edsel Ranger *Ranger* or a regular Studebaker Lark Jamboree *attendee*—just couldn't possibly offer.

Whatever you're into, automotively speaking, even Mitsubishi Twin Sticks, the Internet has your inner car bore covered, along with your outer one. And there's room for everyone—scholars, pedants, and blowhards, all-knowing Rain Men and flighty voyeurs alike. Single-marque, single-model. Every marque, every model. Design, engineering, tech—there are a million ways in. In short, everything you love to think about can be found on the Internet, somewhere that won't take you long to find, along with someone who wants to share it.

It's not just the dedicated sites, either. Car lust has invaded Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Tumblr, and many other popular sharing and pretending to be caring places for letting your hair hang down, including the ones your kids don't want you to know about. Fortunately for them there aren't enough hours in the day for a single person to monitor all of them. There are plenty of proper automotive websites one might read, of course, with endless amounts of content. (I recommend *Automobile's* fine online site, myself.) But, truth to tell, the social media presences of a few like-minded individuals on Facebook alone can waste most of my day, with the added benefit that I am no longer forced to explain to indifferent loved ones why they ought to find my particular interest interesting, because there's someone who's twice as into it as me just a mouse click away.

When it came time to find an idler box for my 1970 Rover 3500S, Facebook's seven different Rover P6 groups were there at the ready. I'd wasted months looking elsewhere, then, in desperation, posted a cry for help. Within an hour, a fellow in England who had been sold one by accident was mailing my new LHD idler box to America.

But that sounds very practical, and I'm not here to discuss the practical. Where else can you find a page where people post photoshopped images of what British Leyland might have done to update the looks of the Austin Westminster for the modern day? Yeah, that's right, if there were a British Leyland anymore or, for that matter, any enthusiasm for Austin or Austin Westminsters outside of a very small circle of very strange people. But God save them all, with their lunacy-tinged memories of Britain's disappeared industrial empire.

I'm here to talk about dreaming of cars you might buy, but the knowledge of being able to find parts makes the hunt so much broader, the dream so much more vivid.

One Facebook friend who posts frequently on the British Saloon Car Club of Canada's spirited FB group is on the lookout for the earliest Morris Minor ever sold in North America. The fact of its earliness, I've learned, will be proved by an imperceptible difference in taillight size and a few other things too dull to recount. Many of his fellow group members are eager to help him, and I wish them well.

One group, whose secrecy its 79 members have been sworn to uphold, invites members to share top Craigslist offerings. Popular recent postings include notice of an unrusted 1952 Ford cab-over stake truck lying fallow in a field in the Mid-



west, which sparked a thoughtful discussion of its many possibilities. Another invited members to consider a 1962 Heinkel 103A-2 Tourist scooter, and still another a 1983 GMC 3500 Dually. So cool.

Of course, the best thing about automotive social media, self-made, self-regulated, and organically grown, is that it's not the content being posted by carmakers themselves. "How do you wash your Volkswagen?" a company-sponsored Facebook page asked viewers a while back. Although the ensuing tsunami of

CAR LUST HAS INVADED INSTAGRAM, SNAPCHAT, PINTEREST, TUMBLR, AND MANY OTHER POPULAR SHARING AND PRETENDING TO BE CARING PLACES.

off-color responses was amusingly not what VW bargained for, it was for this car nut nothing next to the ads that get called out for me online every day. Rolling testaments to the indefatigable human spirit, like the bullet-riddled, six-door airport limousines and their crack-addled sellers. The Plymouth Crickets with their peeling vinyl roofs and disintegrating interiors that appear to have been made of crudely recycled banana peels. I love the smell of used cars first thing in the morning. And thanks to the Internet, the whole rest of the day, too. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM MARRS



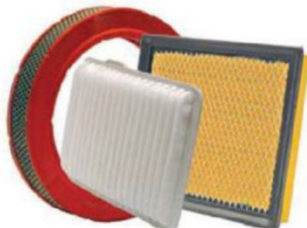
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2016 CAMARO

WELL, THE FORD GUYS LIKE IT



T

HE NEW CAMARO (“2016 CHEVROLET CAMARO,”
July 2015) looks like the current one, which looks in
turn just like the 1969 Camaro. Why? The Camaro

chieftains either loved the '69 car as kids or they just happen to own one now. A Caddy stylist submitted a design based on the second-generation Camaro, but it's rejected as “dainty.” Is it just me, or is the best-looking car in your story the 1971 Camaro RS? And no matter which engine you choose, the 2016 Camaro will be around \$3,000 more than the 2015 model and also more money than every Mustang model. Forgive me, but this Ford salesman (me) just can't stop doing his happy dance.

JEFF CLARK
East Rochester, New York

CAMAROS: YOU MISSED ONE

It may be easy to overlook the 1984 Camaro Z28, given its relatively modest engine output (“The 10 Greatest Camaros of All Time,” July 2015). However, almost anyone who was paying attention at the time will remember how essential the launch of the high-output 5.0-liter Chevy V-8 was in restoring a legitimate ponycar race in Detroit. Until then, the Z28 was a stoplight embarrassment next to the Mustang GT 5.0. Moreover, the 1984 Z28's success convinced management to eventually

approve the IROC series that kept the Camaro competitive for the remainder of the 1980s. And a screaming-chicken Pontiac, for goodness sake?
ROBERT WILHITE
Hyattsville, Maryland

You left out the most important inspiration of all in the design of the Camaro: the 1962 Ferrari 250 GT Berlinetta Lusso. And don't let 'em tell you otherwise, because us guys have got eyes. It was talked about a lot when the 1967 Camaro was new.
WALTER JAMIESON JR.
Via Internet

RANTING ABOUT ROBOCARS

I enjoyed Arthur St. Antoine's peevish rant about robocar enthusiasts (“The Asphalt Jungle,” July 2015). If the occupants of the Twitterverse (a universe populated by tweets) can't resist the urge to share a constant stream of banalities with the rest of the world, they should stick to the digital highway and leave the real roads to those of us who are responsible enough to pay attention to what we are doing.
LYLE HELDENBRAND
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Amen, amen, amen! That's the conviction I wish more car enthusiasts displayed regularly. The extinction of drivers, indeed. I long for the day that I get the privilege of teaching my three young sons to execute a perfect heel-and-toe downshift. Keep fighting the good fight!

KYLE WILKS
Huntington Beach, California

While I don't disagree with Arthur St. Antoine's rant about distracted driving, having grown up in the 1950s and 1960s, I know that the blood on our highways did not appear with the invention of cellphones and social media.

PAUL DAVIS
Grants Pass, Oregon

The robots are here, just not in the way we thought they would show up. Along with flying cars, personal jet packs, and vacations to Mars, we were promised robots. Honest-to-goodness automated servants that would mow the lawn, cook dinner, and stack the dishes. Rosie, George Jetson's household robot, comes to mind. Well, it appears as though the personal robots are just about here. Except cooking dinner won't be part of their programming. Transporting us to dinner, now that is something they should excel at.

DON LABRIOLA
Mokena, Illinois

THE LESSONS OF PROGRESS

How out of touch are you? (“Four Seasons Wrap: 2015 Volvo V60 T5,” July 2015.) I'm not sure about Prince, but vinyl records are making a huge comeback, and “SNL” is as popular as ever. More important, Volvo has always been upscale, but not quite Mercedes-Benz upscale. How does a price tag of \$40K mean that Volvo is going upscale? You can purchase a Subaru Outback for more than \$35K.

DAVID ORLINS
Muscatine, Iowa

DESIGN LANGUAGE

Your resident designer Robert Cumberford obviously knows the language of automobile design (2016 Camaro “Design Analysis,” July 2015). However, the use of words like “elegant” and “elegance” in reference to shapes

of metal, plastic, rubber, and glass seems misplaced. Perhaps those words should be reserved for descriptions of the human form, e.g. Audrey Hepburn or Sophia Loren. Petite or full-figured, they personify elegance.

DAVE HOLMES

South Hill, Washington

Sorry, [former] Bentley design director Luc Donckerwolke, but the Lincoln Continental Concept ("Ignition," July 2015) makes the Bentley EXP 10 Speed 6 concept ("By Design," July 2015) look like a lump of coal.

DALE COCHRAN

Hiawassee, Georgia

Since I was 13, I have been a car guy. When I was 2, it was Hot Wheels. When I was 10, remote-control cars were all the rage. Now that I am almost old enough to drive, it is the Ford GT ("By Design," June 2015). As much as it is stunning to behold, it does not lose the sense that it is still a masterpiece of engineering. This is the way of American design.

ARMANDO SOL

Boston, Massachusetts

Love the gorgeous photo by William Walker of the Corvette Z06 and McLaren 650S Spider lost in the scenery of Palm Springs ("Balance of Power," May 2015). It just tied together the rest of his pictures. Thanks for keeping high-quality photography in your magazine.

STEPHEN SUZUKI

Langley, Washington

A HOT TUB, NOT A TOILET

OK, I have an excuse. I read all my car magazines while sitting in my hot tub, which is outside. During the past winter, 2 feet of snow prevented this. Then the sucker froze and broke! So, I'm catching up. Maybe you've moved on, but I'm going to write this anyway. You had a great choice of cars in your All-Stars issue (January 2015).

EDDIE RENNER

Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania

Write: Automobile Magazine,
831 S. Douglas St., El Segundo, CA 90245.
Email: letters@automobilemag.com.
Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



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SOME 1.5 MILLION PEOPLE ARE

employed in the endeavor of designing, engineering, building, and selling new vehicles. It's a Herculean effort, one we celebrate annually with our New Cars issue. Over the next 36 pages, you'll find 83 cars that have either just come out or will debut very soon. This year, we're also shining a spotlight on a few of the lesser-known folks who help make the cars you see on these pages. Look for them throughout the section. And as always, we've included our unvarnished opinions to aid your car shopping, because the person that matters most to us in this whole process is you. Without you, there are no new cars and there is no New Cars issue.

NEW CARS FOR 2016

CHEVROLET SPARK

Chevrolet's smallest car, originally cheap-feeling

and gawky looking, appears to be growing up. A redesigned, more refined front fascia means the car no longer looks like the vehicular equivalent of one of those toy noses with a mustache and glasses. A new 1.4-liter four-cylinder, paired to a five-speed manual or a CVT automatic, has 14 more horsepower than the old engine, now at a semi-respectable 98 hp. A slightly longer wheelbase and stiffer body should improve the highway ride, which was already pretty good for such a small car. A touchscreen infotainment system is standard, as is a backup camera.

Base price: \$14,500 (est)



SMART FORTWO



You wouldn't know it from the Pixar styling, but the Smart Fortwo has become a serious car. It has grown 3.9 inches wider and now maneuvers far more authoritatively (the old Smart had enough body roll to make the driver sick) and offers more space for its two occupants. A new suspension with taller springs and higher-profile tires deliver a better ride. A turbocharged 0.9-liter three-cylinder sits in back and makes 89 hp, enough to reach 96 mph if you have the patience and courage. The old car's greatest

atrocious, the five-speed automated-manual transmission, is replaced by a six-speed dual-clutch automatic or a five-speed manual gearbox. A stronger safety cell protects occupants should something go awry—a prototype survived a 31-mph collision with a Mercedes-Benz S-Class and still had normally functioning doors. With all the improvements, a basic question remains: Why buy over a similarly priced conventional subcompact?

Base price: \$14,000

CHEVROLET CRUZE



The Cruze, which debuted in 2011, was Chevrolet's first credible small car since, well, forever, but it wasn't perfect. The streamlined-looking new model addresses the main shortcomings, with 2 inches more legroom for the once-tight rear seat and up to 250 pounds of weight reduction. It launches with one gas engine, a turbocharged inline-four that makes an estimated 150 hp and should net 40 mpg on the highway. A new, 1.6-liter turbodiesel follows later.

Base price: \$18,000 (est)

HONDA CIVIC



Honda wants enthusiasts to get excited about the Civic again. To that end, the Civic Type R comes to the U.S. at last and will make more than 300 hp from a 2.0-liter, turbocharged inline-four. The standard car will get forced induction too: a 1.5-liter turbo-four that can be paired with a six-speed manual. Last but not least, the Civic hatchback—the car that helped launch a thousand aftermarket companies—is returning to the States after a decade hiatus.

Base price: \$19,500 (est)

SCION iA



The U.S. will miss out on the latest generation of the Mazda2 subcompact (for now), but this Scion is the next-best thing. Built alongside the Mazda2 at Mazda's plant in Mexico, the Scion iA is basically a sedan version of the Mazda2 hatchback that's already on sale elsewhere in the world. A 106-hp Mazda inline-four with a six-speed manual or automatic nets more

than 40 mpg on the highway. Scion's contributions to this project are mixed. We're not fans of the iA-specific grille, which looks like a catfish, but we do appreciate the brand's generous approach to standard equipment: a rearview camera, push-button start, pre-collision braking, and Bluetooth are all included.

Base price: \$16,000 (est)

SCION iM



Scion's second injection of life comes courtesy of Toyota's European lineup. The iM, which replaces the xB, is based on the Toyota Auris, a hatchback slightly smaller than the Corolla. It offers the same powertrain as the Corolla, a 137-hp, 1.8-liter four-cylinder paired to a six-speed manual or a CVT automatic. Unlike the Corolla, the iM has an independent rear suspension,

which should give it a better ride. It will come with plenty of standard features, including a backup camera and 17-inch aluminum wheels. Not bad for less than \$20,000. Still, we long for the second coming of the original xB, which attracted hipsters and baby boomers alike with its fun, funky styling. This bland-looking hatchback doesn't appear to be it.

Base price: \$19,000 (est)

MEET THE SUBCOMPACT CROSSOVER

The formula for a subcompact crossover is simple: Take a small hatchback, lift it up a couple inches, offer all-wheel drive, and raise the price. As competitors pour into the segment, you'll find a surprising amount of diversity among the flood of new entries.

HONDA HR-V



The Honda HR-V is the best all-rounder and the early segment leader. It's not as stylish as the Fiat or as exciting as the Mazda, but it checks all the right boxes: good fuel economy, mature driving dynamics (the manual is more fun), and competitive pricing. Because the HR-V inherits the Fit's clever, center-mounted fuel tank layout, it offers a large and infinitely configurable interior. The dashboard's plush materials and modern-looking design are just cherries on top, even if we're not huge fans of Honda's button-free touchscreen interface. **Base price: \$19,995**

MAZDA CX-3



The sharp Mazda CX-3 looks more contemporary than the Fiat but makes an equally successful style statement. It drives with the dynamic poise and sportiness that you'd expect from the Zoom-Zoom brand. But climb into the well-

appointed cabin and you'll find that there's not nearly as much space as its rivals, with a cramped rear seat and a tiny cargo area. It's attractive and great to drive, but it doesn't make a lot of sense as a utility vehicle. **Base price: \$20,000 (est)**

FIAT 500X

The Fiat 500X, which shares its platform with the more rugged-looking Jeep Renegade, has plenty of fashionable retro appeal thanks to its fun color palette and cute, rounded styling. But its lackluster powertrain options—a 1.4-liter, turbocharged four-cylinder with a six-speed manual and a 2.4-liter four-cylinder with a nine-speed automatic—aren't refined and provide middling fuel-economy numbers. **Base price: \$20,900**



NEW CARS UNDER \$25K



UNSUNG HEROES

The person who invented a better washer dispenser

HIROKAZU HADA

Drivetrain
Development Team
Mazda Motor Corporation

I have worked for Mazda for 35 years. Around the year 2003, I was working in the No. 1 line of our F plant in Hiroshima as the assistant to the foreman. One day a station operator took a day off, so I had to fill in. Taking out the metal washers needed for the threaded fastener at this station was difficult, and it was easy for operators to make a mistake. [If a line is building 200 cars per day, the station operator will need to grab washers 200 times per day.] Without those washers, there would be a leak of gas from the exhaust system—a quality concern and a problem to the customer. I figured out a device to make sure that operators can pick up the right number of washers every time. I worked with the person responsible for Kaizen [productivity improvement] activities within the plant, and the idea went on to a national Kaizen competition. Now it's used across all our lines.

As told via translator to David Zenlea

MAZDA6



Most midsize sedans are chasing after the same combination of fuel efficiency, mass appeal, and affordability. The Mazda6, refreshed for this year with a higher-quality interior and a vastly improved infotainment system, forges its own path, one that leads to the top of this competitive segment. It is, foremost, a lot of fun to drive, with accurate steering, a firm chassis, and an available six-speed manual gearbox (in addition to a quick-

shifting six-speed automatic). It also looks more expensive, inside and out, than anything in its class, although excessive wind and road noise reminds you it's not a luxury sedan. At the same time, the Mazda6 checks most of the midsize sedan boxes: Fuel efficiency is excellent—40 mpg on the highway from its 184-hp four-cylinder—and quality, per Mazda's reputation, appears to be top notch.

Base price: \$22,315

RANKED AND SPANKED

You won't read too many midsize car comparisons in the pages of *Automobile*—space restrictions sadly prevent us from running too many photos of beige Toyota Camrys.

Our website, however, has all the room in the world, and we have just driven and ranked the segment's newest and best entries. You can find that and other new car comparisons at

Automobilemag.com/extra

CHEVROLET MALIBU



Chevrolet wasted no time redesigning the Malibu, which debuted only three years ago but was poorly conceived because it germinated during GM's bankruptcy. All-new sheetmetal, similar to that on the stylish Impala, stretches over a wheelbase that has increased 3.6 inches to provide

more interior room. A new 1.5-liter, turbo inline-four now serves as a base engine, producing 160 hp. A 250-hp, 2.0-liter turbo remains optional. There will, at long last, be a competitive hybrid variant that employs the Volt's two-motor drive unit.

Base price: \$24,500

KIA OPTIMA

A stiffer body structure and a significantly revised suspension aim to deliver the sportiness and refinement that the Optima's styling has long promised. A 178-hp, turbo inline-four joins the lineup, mated to a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic. A new interior with higher-quality materials continues Kia's march upmarket.

Base price: \$23,000 (est)



TOYOTA TACOMA

It has been more than a decade since we've seen any major updates to the Toyota Tacoma, and that's because it works. For 2016, Toyota is looking to modernize its midsize truck without upsetting its rugged simplicity. All-new, hot-stamped body panels reduce weight and look more aggressive. The interior has softer-touch materials and a new dash layout to accommodate a new array of electronic aids. The biggest change, however, is that the 4.0L V-6 has been replaced with an Atkinson-cycle 3.5L V-6 with port and direct fuel injection for better efficiency and more power. This new motor sounds complicated and will have to prove itself worthy of the Tacoma's reputation for indestructability, yet it is necessary to stay competitive with the rejuvenated Chevrolet Colorado and GMC Canyon. Unlike the GM twins, Toyota will still offer a manual transmission on four-wheel-drive models.

Base price: \$23,000 (est)



HYUNDAI TUCSON



The new Tucson is one of the most stylish entrants in its (admittedly unstylish) segment. A clean interior design integrates lots of technology into an easy-to-use interface. There's technology under the hood too, with a 175-hp, 1.6-liter turbocharged four-cylinder and a dual-clutch automatic transmission that achieve an impressive 29 mpg combined.

Base price: \$23,000 (est)

MITSUBISHI OUTLANDER



Despite an unusually extensive midcycle refresh that significantly improved its ride, handling, quietness, and interior, the Outlander is far from the most sophisticated compact crossover on sale today. It is, however, very affordable and extremely practical, even offering a third row of seats where most rivals offer just two, although the cramped back row is meant only for children.

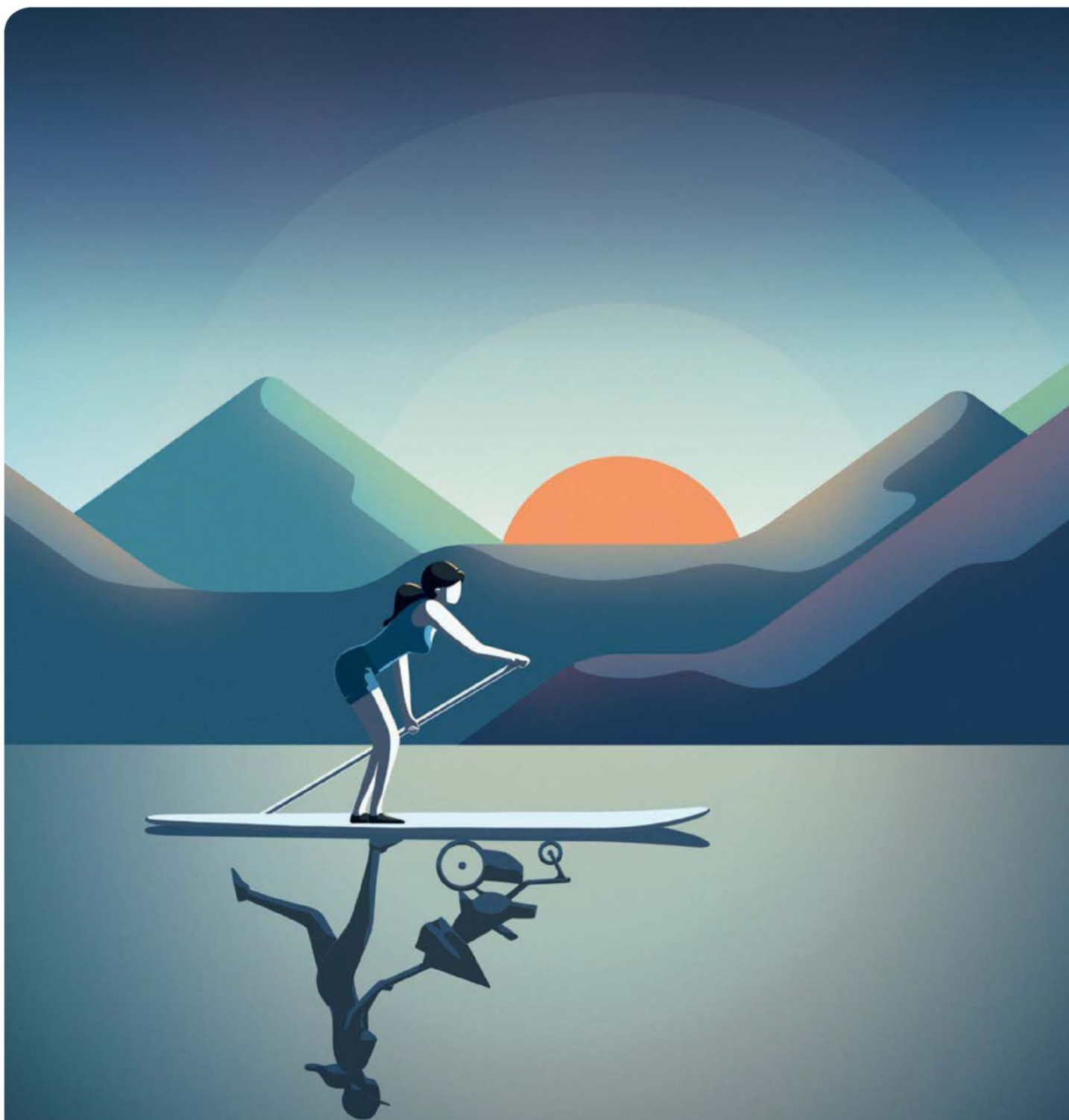
Base price: \$23,845

MAZDA CX-5



Snazzier looks and an updated infotainment system (similar to the Mazda6) are just gravy for what is already our favorite small crossover.

Base price: \$22,675



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HONDA

NISSAN MAXIMA

Large, front-wheel-drive sedans have fallen out of fashion, yet the highly fashionable, nicely finished new Maxima should carve out a niche for itself. Just don't expect it to carve corners.

Give Nissan head designer Shiro Nakamura points for boldness. You won't confuse the Maxima for an Altima—or anything else, really. When the Maxima debuted at the New York auto show in April, it appeared to have more tortured skin than “50 Shades of Grey.” But the Maxima looks much better on the street—even attractive, from some angles. Under the skin, its big 3.5-liter V-6 has been reworked to produce 300 hp, and it now has some 80 fewer pounds to move. The sporty Maxima SR variant gets firmer springs and dampers, a thicker front anti-roll bar, and 19-inch aluminum wheels shod in grippy Goodyear Eagle F1 tires. It also has a horizontally mounted damper up front to help soothe body vibrations. Active ride control taps brakes to quell fore-and-aft pitching.

For all that, the Maxima doesn't drive as engagingly as a BMW 3 Series—or, for that matter, a Mazda6. Ersatz “shifts” from the CVT automatic feel slow, and steering feels artificially stiff. When asked to break a sweat, the Maxima huffs and puffs and reveals that it is, in fact, a big, honking, front-wheel-drive sedan.

Luxury is the real selling point here. The hushed and commodious cabin is a high point. Genuine stitching traces the instrument panel, and drivers twirl a handsome, flat-bottomed steering wheel. Nissan's fatigue-fighting Zero Gravity seats have robust bolsters. A tandem 8.0-inch central screen and 7.0-inch driver's display likely set the class standard for sharp graphics and no-fuss operation.

Base price: \$33,235

\$25K - \$35K







CHEVROLET CAMARO



The outgoing Camaro was like an early Matthew McConaughey character: handsome, hulking, and dumb as a rock. The new, sixth-generation car wants to be like McConaughey's roles today—still dashing but slimmed down and more sophisticated. To that end, it's smaller and rides on a lightweight platform that it shares with the Cadillac ATS and CTS. The interior has also matured, with more

sensibly placed controls and better materials. You can even see out of it. (Kind of.) A 275-hp turbocharged four-cylinder and a re-engineered 335-hp V-6 are sure to account for most sales, but we'd still splurge for the good ol' V-8. The 6.2-liter LT1 puts down 455 hp, same as the base Corvette Stingray. The coupe goes on sale this winter, and the convertible follows next spring.

Base price: \$26,500 (est)

CHEVROLET VOLT



The notion that green, electrified cars should stand out from conventional sedans is so 2010 Toyota Prius. With its sculpted bodywork, the second-generation extended-range

electric Volt resembles its Cruze sibling (critics also see Honda Civic). A 1.5-liter, direct-injection four from GM's new small engine family is more efficient, and an 18.4-kW-hr

battery pack with better energy density boosts pure-electric range to 50 miles. The EPA estimates 41 mpg on gas and 102 mpg-e.

Base price: \$33,995 (before tax incentives)

MINI JOHN COOPER WORKS HARTOP



Go-fast models have been in the Mini Cooper's DNA since the start, and the latest John Cooper Works model is the most hopped-up version yet, with a 228-hp turbo four-cylinder, adaptive dampers, and four-piston Brembo brakes up front. Another Mini tradition, at least in the era of BMW ownership, is a high price. The JCW costs some 10 grand more than the very good Fiesta ST and creeps perilously close to the likes of the larger, all-wheel-drive Volkswagen Golf R. Of course, part of what you're paying for is style, and the JCW delivers with many stripe and color options.

Base price: \$31,450

BUICK CASCADA



The affordable, easy-to-drive convertible is as American as apple pie and, um, Opel. The Cascada, already sold in Europe, fills the void left by the Chrysler 200 convertible. We're not expecting superb driving dynamics—the Cascada makes 200 hp, comes only with a six-speed automatic transmission, and rides on the same platform as the Verano. But Buick promises room for four adults and a decent amount of their stuff, a convenient power-folding top, and a cheaper cost of entry than a droptop Audi A3 or BMW 228i.

Base price: \$34,500 (est)

MAZDA MX-5 MIATA



For all things Miata, see our feature, which begins on page 76.

Base price: \$25,735

HYUNDAI SONATA HYBRID/PLUG-IN HYBRID

The Sonata Hybrid improves to 42 mpg combined.

That's right in step with the Toyota Camry and Ford Fusion hybrids, but still lags behind the Honda Accord Hybrid's 47 mpg combined. A new plug-in variant can travel 24 miles on battery power alone. Both versions are comfortable and quiet but suffer, as do most Hyundais, from oddly tuned electric power steering. The larger electric motor in the plug-in makes for brisk acceleration, but a bulkier battery pack encroaches on total cargo volume.

Base price: \$27,000 for the hybrid, \$34,500 for the PHEV



UNSUNG HEROES

The person who makes your crossover safer

BRIAN BAUTSCH

Senior Engineer,
Crash Safety Leader
Honda R&D Americas

I lead a team that did the crash-safety work for the 2016 Honda Pilot, and we were responsible for setting crash-safety targets, engineering solutions, and conducting tests. We start our work in a computerized form almost as soon as a vehicle concept is created, continue with the vehicle prototypes, and then evaluate the late prototypes to make sure they meet our targets. In the virtual phase, we employ LSTA's LS-DYNA, a finite-element analysis tool, as well as special software developed for us by Dassault Systèmes 3DExcite that gives us a very precise, three-dimensional picture of the vehicle. From small simulations to full-scale simulations, we conducted 553 virtual tests for the 2016 Pilot. We then conducted 220 physical tests on actual prototypes, which involved 102 vehicles.

As told to Michael Jordan

ACURA ILX



The refreshed Acura ILX finally feels more prestigious than a Honda Civic Si—although still not as special as a Mercedes-Benz CLA-Class—thanks to sharper suspension tuning and better sound insulation. It also

now comes with an excellent eight-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission. The slick six-speed manual, which accounted for about 1 percent of sales, has been nixed.

Base price: \$28,820

CHRYSLER 300

The massaged front

fascia will have even more people asking, "Is that a Bentley?" The interior still answers, "Nope," but it is nicer than before, especially when done up in light blue and tan leather. The Hemi V-8 no longer comes with all-wheel drive.

Base price: \$32,690





HONDA PILOT



The Pilot, which formerly sold on its reputation more than its merits, vaults to the head of the three-row crossover class.

One glance at the exterior tells you this isn't the same boring box as before. An aggressively styled fascia gives the Pilot a car-like appearance at the front, and along the flanks and at the rear the Pilot is now more in line with the rest of the segment.

Step into the cabin and, on most models, you'll find a newly designed, 8.0-inch navigation and infotainment screen complemented by a 4.2-inch color screen in the instrument panel. Open the door to the second row, and you'll find either a bench or captain's chair setup, depending on the configuration. The third row isn't a penalty box for adults, and getting back there is easier than before.

Bomb along a stretch of northern Kentucky back road, as Honda invited us to

do, and you'll find the Pilot handles its business extremely well for a three-row crossover. In addition to myriad suspension and handling upgrades, including Honda's new torque-vectoring system for all-wheel-drive models, the Pilot benefits from a lighter and more rigid body structure. While the 3.5-liter V-6 is still the only engine available, it's been massaged significantly, and power is up (280 hp, 262 lb-ft of torque). Two automatic transmission options are available: a new-to-the-Pilot six-speed or a new-to-Honda nine-speed, which is unquestionably the one to pick.

Also added to the mix is an impressive suite of active safety features, including blind-spot monitoring, forward collision warning, lane-keeping assist, adaptive cruise control, and a rear cross-traffic alert.

Base price: \$30,875

FORD EXPLORER

The Explorer has classed up its act considerably since the days of Eddie Bauer editions. The snappy appearance seems inspired by the Range Rover, and the \$53,595 Explorer Platinum gets a luxurious interior treatment to go along with its 365-hp, twin-turbo V-6 and all-wheel

drive. Even so, utility remains the prime directive here. The power-operated tailgate can now be triggered remotely, and the third-row seats fold down at the push of a button. A turbo-four engine returns, but it grows to 2.3 liters and 280 hp, enough for Ford to offer a trailer-towing package.



The suite of active safety features expands with front and rear cameras that have an

automated washing function to keep things clear.

Base price: \$31,990

INFINITI Q30/QX30



Infiniti is getting into the entry-level luxury segment with the Q30 hatchback and QX30 crossover that go on sale in early 2016.

These new compacts will compete with the Mercedes-Benz CLA-Class and GLA-Class, with which, incidentally, they share a platform and a turbo four-cylinder engine.

Base price: \$30,000 (est)

NISSAN TITAN XD



Searching for a breakthrough in the Detroit-dominated large pickup market, Nissan is aiming the Titan XD at a hole between light-duty and heavy-duty trucks. On paper, it seems to hit its mark: When optioned with a Cummins turbodiesel V-8 that makes 555 lb-ft of torque, it'll tow upward of 12,000 pounds. The big question is whether the not-quite-heavy-duty truck will actually find a market, or if Americans have ignored it for a reason.

Base price: \$34,000 (est)

KIA SORENTO



Bigger, sleeker, more plush, and better equipped than the outgoing model, the latest Sorento is a strong step forward for Kia. Of three available engines, the best is the 2.0-liter turbo-four. Its 240 hp and 260 lb-ft of torque provide generous thrust for such a large car, making it an easy choice over the base four-cylinder or the louder, heavier, and thirstier 3.3-liter V-6.

Base price: \$25,925

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JAGUAR XE

It's hard to overstate the importance of the XE to

Jaguar: It has basically bet the business on delivering a viable contender to the BMW 3 Series and Mercedes-Benz C-Class. With the XE coming to the U.S. next year, Jag will be marketing its aluminum construction, trumpeting a new diesel engine, and showcasing its latest in-cockpit tech in an all-out effort to make a dent in the compact sport sedan segment.

As with the rest of the Jaguar lineup, the XE holds a key advantage over its rivals with its aluminum monocoque. It also uses a sophisticated control-arm suspension up front where most competitors still use struts. The result is a nimble car that rides extraordinarily well. It also feels refreshingly analog even though it has electric power steering and offers high-tech helpers such as brake-based torque vectoring.

The XE's sporting interior mixes driver-focused cues from the F-Type with elegant overtones from Jag's larger sedans. The new 8.0-inch touchscreen is class-competitive.

Two engines will be available to start, the 340-hp, supercharged V-6 employed across the Jag range and the brand's in-house designed 180-hp, 2.0-liter turbodiesel, both mated to eight-speed automatics. A new 2.0-liter, gas four-cylinder comes later and will be offered with a six-speed manual. Take your pick of rear-wheel or all-wheel drive.

Base price: \$38,000 (est)

FORD FOCUS RS



Those of you pouring out Red Bull for the soon-to-be-departed Evo might consider the all-wheel-drive Focus RS, which has never been sold before in the United States but enjoys an international reputation as a wild ride. A turbo four-cylinder sends 315 hp exclusively

through a six-speed manual. Functional aerodynamic aids, lightweight wheels, and a tail-out Drift Mode for its torque-vectoring system ensure that this will be one of the hottest hatches to ever hit our shores.

Base price: \$37,500 (est)

AUDI TT



If you can't wait for an RS 3, consider the new TT, which has slimmed down some 100 pounds and is more performance-focused than ever. The rumbling, 292-hp turbo-four in the TTS is yet another giant leap forward in the quest to be taken seriously. However,

some of TT's exuberant individuality has been lost. From the outside, it looks like just another Audi. The biggest innovations await inside, where you'll find fast-responding, intuitive controls in an attractive dashboard.

Base price: \$43,825

BMW 2 SERIES CONVERTIBLE



Anyone considering a 4 Series hardtop convertible should note that the smaller, cheaper 2 Series offers more trunk room with its softtop down and weighs some 370 pounds less. The rear seats fold to create even more space—you'll be carrying everyone else's golf

bags. It's available in the same trims as the 2 Series coupe, right up to the 320-hp M235i. Honestly, though, the base 228i, blessed with rear-wheel-drive balance and a powerful four-cylinder, is the way to go.

Base price: \$38,850

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R



Leave track-day heroics to the Focus RS. What the Golf R brings to the all-wheel-drive hot-hatch party is sophistication. That's not to say it's boring: VW takes the tasty recipe we know and love in the Golf GTI and spices it up considerably with 292 hp delivered to all four wheels via a six-speed dual-clutch automatic. (A manual will be available starting this fall.) The Volkswagen Golf R will hit 60 mph in less than 5 seconds, but all of that aggression is tempered by a high-class interior and ride quality that will pass muster if you need to drive your mother-in-law to lunch.

Base price: \$37,415

MITSUBISHI LANCER EVOLUTION FINAL EDITION



Mitsubishi plans to celebrate the life of its adrenaline-packed performance sedan with a Final Edition model. Essentially an Evo MR but with a manual transmission instead of a dual-clutch automatic, the Final Edition should sport in-your-face touches such as a giant rear wing, Bilstein dampers, and lightweight, forged-aluminum BBS wheels. Engine tweaks push hp from 291 well into the 300 range. Only 1,600 will come to the U.S., each wearing a numbered plaque.

Base price: \$42,000 (est)



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RAM 1500 REBEL

Just in case the blacked-out grille, massive tailgate lettering, and 33-inch tires didn't tip you off, this isn't a typical Ram 1500. Best-in-class ground clearance, skidplates, four-wheel drive, and an air suspension with custom-tuned Bilstein dampers provide capability to match the Rebel's looks. Ram has not, however, engineered a unique engine for the Rebel—it comes with either a 305-hp V-6 or a 395-hp Hemi V-8. But perhaps the most important takeaway is that the Rebel costs some \$10,000 less than what you can expect to pay for the (admittedly cooler and more capable) Ford F-150 Raptor.

Base price: \$43,985

MERCEDES-BENZ C350E



Mercedes-Benz is embracing hybrids, proclaiming that it will have 10 new plug-ins by 2017. Of those, the reasonably priced C350e is likely to be one of the most popular. It will deliver 19 miles of electric cruising, and its liquid-cooled battery pack can get juiced up in just 90 minutes from a 240-volt quick-charger. Its 80-hp electric motor can also boost the 211-hp four-cylinder. As in the much pricier S-Class plug-in hybrid, you can program when and where the car uses its EV power or its regenerative capacity. Most important, the C350e looks and feels just like a C-Class, although a wooden brake pedal and the extra weight sap driving pleasure.

Base price: \$45,000 (est)

AUDI A3 E-TRON



Audi's plug-in hybrid arrives at last, offering 31 miles of electric range, a 150-hp, turbocharged four-cylinder engine, and the kind of green-friendly glamour that has helped the Tesla Model S succeed.

Base price: \$40,000 (est)



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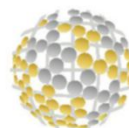
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LEXUS RX



Lexus' cash cow adopts many of the adventurous and extroverted styling cues of the smaller NX crossover. Families that can get beyond the looks will find the RX is more spacious and boasts a vastly upgraded infotainment system with a massive 12.3-inch display screen. They'll also love that all of Lexus' active safety technology is bundled in a single \$650 package, offered on both RX 350 and hybrid RX 450h models.

Base price: \$44,000 (est)

BMW X1



BMW's smallest SUV moves from the rear-wheel-drive 3 Series architecture to a front-wheel-drive platform shared with the Mini Cooper. We venture to guess it won't drive as well as it used to. But most luxury crossover shoppers won't notice. The new model will offer significantly more interior space and better fuel economy. It debuts with a turbo four-cylinder and all-wheel drive.

Base price: \$35,000 (est)

INFINITI QX50



The EX35 was like that guest who arrives too early to a party. It debuted in 2008, when no one wanted compact luxury crossovers. Now they're all the rage, and Infiniti hopes to catch the rising tide by updating and lengthening the 7-year-old vehicle. Based on the old G37—sorry, Q40—sport sedan, it should still drive well enough to warrant consideration.

Base price: \$35,995

MERCEDES-BENZ GLC-CLASS



We liked the C-Class sedan enough to call it an All-Star last year, so the new GLC-Class crossover that builds on the C-Class' platform, engine, and design sensibility has the bones to be a worthy competitor to the BMW X3 and Lexus NX. Though it replaces the GLK, the GLC moves up in size to distance itself from the entry-level GLA. The cleanly styled exterior is tasteful if a bit too familiar.

The posh interior features a nice blend of impressive technology and high-quality materials. A turbo four-cylinder paired with a new nine-speed automatic is the launch powertrain in the United States. Diesel, plug-in hybrid, and high-powered AMG variants are sure to follow soon, as is a more rakishly styled coupe variant to go up against the BMW X4.

Base price: \$39,825

RANGE ROVER EVOQUE CONVERTIBLE

The Nissan Murano CrossCabriolet was terminally uncool, but a chop-top Evoque actually piques our interest. Credit the little Range Rover's stunning good looks, which have been enhanced this year with full LED headlights.



Base price: \$50,000 (est)

VOLVO XC90

The first Volvo engineered fully under Chinese ownership is a winner. Chrome accents and “Thor’s Hammer” LEDs up front bring just the right amount of bling. The quality and creativity of the interior materials, including an optional crystal shift knob, will make Audi blush. A supercharged and turbocharged four-cylinder replaces the old inline-six. The smaller, lighter engine helps the XC90 corner with surprising friskiness for a full-size crossover. A plug-in hybrid version, which promises 59 mpg, comes out this fall.

Base price: \$49,895



AUDI Q7



Audi has sucked the fat out of its large crossover. The new Q7 looks more like a big Golf SportWagen than an SUV and, in fact, weighs 715 pounds less than its predecessor, depending on trim. Naturally, it drives a whole lot better, turning in more accurately and tolerating higher cornering speeds before understeering. The supercharged,

333-hp V-6 sounds almost as good as it does in the S4 sedan, and the revised turbodiesel V-6 will certainly exceed the range of your bladder on roadtrips. The seven-seat interior doesn’t wow us quite as much as Audis have in the past—maybe we’re spoiled—but is easy to see out of and easy to configure.

Base price: \$49,500

LINCOLN MKX



Under its curvaceous-yet-restrained sheetmetal, the MKX is still a Ford Edge. (Don’t fret; the new Edge drives quite well.) The Lincoln comes with more grunt from a 300-hp, 3.7-liter V-6 or a 330-hp, 2.7-liter,

twin-turbo V-6. With the latter engine, the MKX is the most powerful front-wheel-drive vehicle on sale, which is a roundabout way of saying you should opt for all-wheel drive.

Base price: \$38,995

FORD SHELBY GT350 AND GT350R

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SHAWN CARNEY

Sound Quality Engineer
Ford Motor Company

I joined the Mustang team in 2003 and am part of the group that makes sure that when the car is bolted together it sounds the way customers expect it to sound. We'll listen to the Camaro, which always sounded like a farm truck to me, and the Challenger, but also other stuff. I enjoyed the Audi S5 V-8 coupe. We can reverse-engineer sounds we like and figure out what frequencies generate them. When we're shaping the sound, we're mostly working with the muffler, but all the components are tuned for a purpose. With the Mustang GT, the new 5.0-liter V-8 has a different firing order than the old small-block Ford V-8 and has a different, 2-into-1 exhaust header. We couldn't get the sound exactly where the old 5.0-liter was, but we tried. With the four-cylinder engine, we spent a lot more time managing "error states." The four-cylinder wants to boom and moan. We do what we can, but it's just tough with a turbo four-cylinder. All you'll hear is that turbo whistle. We also have a full, active noise-control system in the car. As a lifelong Mustang fan, the goal was to make it sound plausible. I made up a lot of cool sounds to try to give you a realistic experience.

As told to David Zenlea

Amazing as the Ford GT is sure to be, the more accessible new Shelby Mustangs

might be an even greater feat. Starting for less than \$50,000, the GT350 features a naturally aspirated, 5.2-liter V-8 engine that produces 526 hp and 429 lb-ft of torque and revs to 8,250 rpm. The engine has a flat-plane crankshaft—typically reserved for exotic supercars and race cars—which pushes exhaust through and out of the V-8 more efficiently than everyday engines. A six-speed manual is the only transmission available, and almost every piece of added bodywork is functional, aiming to reduce heat or increase downforce. It also has adaptive dampers and six-piston brake calipers. Following Carroll Shelby's formula from the '60s, Ford will also offer a race-focused but still road-legal "competition" model, the GT350R, which gets 19-inch carbon-fiber wheels that dramatically reduce unsprung weight.

Base price: \$49,995

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MOTORTREND **FOURWHEELER**

BFGoodrich® Tires, MOTORTREND and FOUR WHEELER invited performance driving enthusiasts to submit a short video proving he or she was indeed "driver enough" to lay down the fastest lap time behind the wheel of a 2015 Mustang GT and a 2014 Ford Raptor. Six winners were handpicked from around the country and flown out to Willow Springs International Raceway, just north of Los Angeles, to challenge themselves and each other behind the wheel. To make things even more interesting, another 50 local enthusiasts were presented with the opportunity to sign up through a microsite to partake in the event.

The Driver Enough Challenge consisted of a customized road course as well as a rough and demanding off-road track. The road course challenged participants through a series of fast straights, tight corners and a host of elevation changes. Adjacent to the road course, the rugged off-road track was designed to test the drivers' skills behind the wheel on rough, rocky terrain.

In addition to a classroom "chalk talk," professional driving instructors demoed the fastest lines around each respective course, and our challengers were also introduced to our celebrity BFGoodrich performance pro drivers who set baseline lap times on each course, thus setting the ultimate time to beat.

Brad Lovell has raced and won many off-road races including: Baja 1000, Ultra 4, TORC, and nearly every other off-road discipline. His on-road counterpart, Andrew Comrie-Picard, has won the North American Rally Championship, holds a string of 17 consecutive Rally America podiums and is an X Games Rally medalist.

Lovell and ACP weren't the only two glitterati at the Driver Enough Challenge. Road racing legend

Tommy Kendall made an appearance, as did *Motor Trend's* globetrotting Editor-in-Chief, Ed Loh. Additionally, Rick Péwé, Content Director of the *Four Wheeler* Network, offered his insight and tips for the off-road portion.

BFGoodrich® Tires took full advantage of the event to prove its tires were also up to the task at hand. The on-road course featured a group of brand-new 2015 Mustang GT's

"CHALLENGERS WERE INTRODUCED TO OUR CELEBRITY PRO DRIVERS WHO SET BASELINE TIMES ON EACH COURSE"

fitted with g-Force™ Comp-2™ A/S tires, BFGoodrich® Tire's best-ever, ultra-high performance all-season tire. The g-Force™ Comp-2 A/S™ rubber gave the challengers the ability to accelerate faster and brake harder in their quest for fast times.

The off-road course proved to be the perfect

setting for 2014 Ford Raptors outfitted with BFGoodrich® Tire's All-Terrain T/A® KO2 meats. The All-Terrain T/A® KO2's tougher sidewalls, gravel endurance and improved traction all worked wonders on the off-road course as they helped the drivers hook up and push ahead.

Once the dust settled and the track went cold, each challenger's cumulative times and overall performance of on and off-road runs were calculated to determine our winners. Wade Koehl from Cypress, TX, came home with third, Gardner Nichols from Boulder, CO, took second place, and Mike Iler, from Redlands, CA, took home first place and won the grand prize of a new set of BFGoodrich® Tires.

Our pro drivers were astonished with Iler's uncanny ability to lay down consistent, controlled and fast lap times, particularly as he doesn't have any prior racing experience. Iler lapped the off-road course within a tenth of a second of Lovell's pro lap time, and proceeded to beat the on-road pro by nearly a second!

The Driver Enough Challenge was such a success that similar events may be planned in the future. Think you're driver enough? You might get the chance to prove it soon!



MOTORTREND.COM/DRIVERENOUGH



CADILLAC CT6

Cadillac is in the process of trading places with BMW

in the pantheon of luxury brands. While the pride of Bavaria lately has given sporting dynamics a back seat to luxury and comfort, Detroit's finest is out to prove that Cadillac hallmarks can coexist with best-in-class dynamics and reasonably low curb weights.

Take the new CT6, which rides on a newly developed rear-wheel-drive platform. It's slightly longer than a short-wheelbase BMW 7 Series sedan but weighs less than a 5 Series. That's barely 3,700 pounds when the car is equipped with a 265-hp, 2.0-liter turbo-four and rear-wheel drive. Cadillac will also offer a 335-hp, 3.6-liter V-6 and a twin-turbo, 400-plus-hp, 3.0-liter V-6. Both will come standard with all-wheel drive. A 335-hp plug-in hybrid comes along in the 2017 model year. Further out, a new overhead-cam V-8 is in the works.

Amenities include a camera that projects onto the rearview mirror, massaging rear seats, four-zone climate control, and a 34-speaker Bose audio system. As in other Cadillacs, one must learn to love touch-sensitive controls. Luckily, the CT6 has a larger center screen than the one in the ATS and CTS.

About one year after the CT6's launch, Cadillac plans to offer a semi-autonomous driving package similar to what's on the self-steering, self-braking Mercedes-Benz S-Class.

Base price: \$75,000 (est)



ALFA ROMEO 4C SPIDER

For \$10,300 more than the coupe, the 4C

Spider offers a removable, semi-soft, Targa-style panel in place of a fixed roof, meaning wind-in-your-hair fun after just a minute or so of fiddling with the roof's sliding-pin attachment system. The top rolls up and fits in a storage bag, which can be stashed in the Alfa's single trunk, aft of the engine. There's one caveat: The top eats up about three-quarters of the already marginal space in the trunk, so don't plan on fitting much more than a backpack and a couple jackets when the top's stowed. On the plus side, it's easier to climb in and out of the 4C with the roof off.

Practical issues aside (and, really, you're worried about practicality in an Alfa?) the Spider remains every bit a 4C. The carbon-fiber tub is the same as the coupe's and so is the suspension tuning. The 1.7-liter, turbocharged I-4 lives behind your ears, paired to a six-speed dual-clutch automatic.

Sure enough, the 4C Spider is just as visceral, just as dynamic, just as tuned-in as its hard-roofed sibling, but the extra elements of wind, sky, and glorious Alfa noise make the experience that much more enjoyable. We recommend opting for the Spider-exclusive paint color: Giallo Prototipo (yellow, in plainer terms).

Base price: \$65,495

LOTUS EVORA 400



After its latest near-death experience, Lotus is back in the U.S. with a revised Evora. And we're glad; the Evora has always been a lovely driver's car, blessed with excellent handling balance and a perfect little steering wheel that feels alive in your hands. The styling, only mildly revised since the car debuted five years ago, is still so uncommon a sight that folks will think you're driving something far more expensive. The Toyota-sourced V-6 is now supercharged to 400 hp.

Base price: \$89,900

JAGUAR XF



The new XF might look pretty similar to the old one, but more than 80 percent of its parts are new. Many of those parts, including an aluminum-intensive structure, are lighter, resulting in a weight loss of 130 pounds for rear-wheel-drive models and a whopping 270 pounds for all-wheel-drive cars. At the same time, the wheelbase has grown 2 inches to allow more legroom. The screen in the center console, formerly about as large and impressive as the screen on an old Texas Instruments calculator, has been replaced by a crisp-looking 10.2-inch unit. All this progress does come at a price: The mellifluous supercharged V-8 is gone, leaving only a lineup of 3.0-liter V-6 engines, at least for now.

Base price: \$57,000



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PORSCHE BOXSTER SPYDER/CAYMAN GT4

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The Boxster Spyder and Cayman GT4 come just as the convertible and coupe near their next major update, and they're awesome. The Boxster Spyder is the lightest Boxster in the lineup and, with 375 hp, the most powerful. The Spyder has the suspension from a Boxster GTS and the brakes from a 911 Carrera S. There's no radio or air-conditioning (although both can be optioned). The 385-hp Cayman GT4 is even fiercer. Its chassis setup is almost indistinguishable from the current 911 GT3's. A big, fixed rear wing sits above a mini-duckbill spoiler to increase downforce. Both cars start for about the same money as a base 911. Of course, you'll be tempted by the list of options, including carbon-ceramic brakes and insanely comfortable bucket seats made out of carbon-fiber composite. For the GT4, Porsche also offers a Sport Chrono package with an all-new Track Precision smartphone app. One option you can't get on either car? An automatic transmission.

Base price: \$83,095 (Boxster Spyder), \$85,595 (GT4)



JAGUAR F-TYPE



All-wheel drive is now standard on

V-8 F-Types and optional with the V-6. It tames the Jag's wild antics without neutering them. On a dry track in Dynamic mode, the system allows a generous amount of throttle adjustability before transitioning smoothly to greater traction and faster, more efficient progress. Electric power

steering, also new this year, has less on-center feel than the old hydraulic system but is still hyperalert. A six-speed manual newly offered on V-6 F-Types isn't the slickest, but the pedals are perfectly placed for heel-and-toe downshifts, assuming you have the footwork.

Base price: \$65,995

FORD F-150 RAPTOR



You're probably tired of hearing about how much lighter the aluminum-bodied F-150 is, but the new Raptor makes it worth repeating once more. The loss of 500 pounds will surely help the new Raptor hit ludicrous speeds on dirt trails. So, too, will the turbocharged 3.5-liter V-6, which is rumored to make 450 hp. We can also expect even larger Fox Racing dampers with more suspension travel, an all-new terrain management system, and a set of BFGoodrich All-Terrain KO2 tires. All great features, but what the original Raptor really needed was a better way to select gears manually. We'll have to wait to see what kind of manual control Ford will offer with the 10-speed automatic it plans to mate to the V-6.

Base price: \$50,000 (est)

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LEXUS GS F

The GS was once the only sedan from Lexus to touch the hearts of enthusiasts, so it's only fitting for the midsize four-door to get the full "F" treatment for 2016. The centerpiece of the exercise will be a 5.0-liter V-8 that sends 467 hp to the rear wheels. It's the same engine that powers the RC F. A lot of muscle, but we do wonder whether it will be sufficient to keep pace with the 560-hp BMW M5.

Base price: \$85,000 (est)



MERCEDES-AMG C63

The old C63 was a cartoon character, what with its firing-range exhaust note and tail-out cornering antics. The new car is more sophisticated and well-rounded. It corners with more enthusiasm and brakes with right-now urgency, even without the optional carbon-ceramic rotors. The twin-turbo V-8, for better or for worse, delivers its power in relaxed fashion, but the output is an undeniably brutal 469 hp (503 hp in the C63 S). An optional two-mode exhaust still delivers a thunderous soundtrack.

Base price: \$64,825



CADILLAC ATS-V



Performance cars from General Motors used to fixate on numbers in attempt to distract from how wholly uncompetitive they were. If a Pontiac Grand Prix could generate higher cornering forces than a BMW 5 Series, while turning right and traveling in reverse, then surely it had to be a superior car, right? The ATS-V, available as a sedan and coupe, puts up impressive figures, including 464 hp from its twin-turbo V-6. But you can also tell that very talented drivers have tuned its magnetorheological dampers and fussed over its zero-compliance ball joints. The result is a car whose capabilities feel accessible yet has vast reserves of power, braking, and composure.

**Base Price: \$63,660/
\$61,460 (coupe/sedan)**

CADILLAC CTS-V



Cadillac dealerships, which are already having trouble moving the base CTS due to its price jump over its predecessor, might have trouble communicating why the hot-rod version has climbed some \$20,000. We'll try to help: The new CTS-V makes 84 additional hp, for 640 total. It also is still a bargain compared with the BMW M5 and Mercedes-AMG E63, at least on paper. Looking beyond the stats, the base CTS made a quantum leap in driving dynamics and refinement over its predecessor. We suspect the V-series variant will do the same.

Base price: \$84,990

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BMW 7 SERIES

As agile as a BMW 5 Series, as cossetting as a Mercedes-Benz

S-Class, and as impeccably put together as an Audi A8. That's the mission brief for the new 7 Series. To achieve it, engineers use plenty of aluminum and carbon fiber to reduce weight and add stiffness. A new, 320-hp inline-six and a plug-in hybrid join the powertrain lineup, while a standard air suspension and optional adaptive anti-roll bars ensure maximum comfort for occupants. Other gee-whiz features include gesture controls for the infotainment system.

Only long-wheelbase models will come to the United States.

Base price: \$82,250



LINCOLN CONTINENTAL

Lincoln's new flagship hopes to win over skeptics with tons

of features, plenty of style, and a historic name. It will still be related to a front-wheel-drive Ford, but the signature engine will be an exclusive-to-Lincoln 3.0-liter, twin-turbo V-6 producing some 350 hp, and it will have all-wheel drive. Whereas Cadillac emphasizes performance, the Continental will be about quiet, comfortable luxury in the grand American tradition.

Base price: \$55,000



TESLA MODEL S D



The Model S electric sedan gets more horsepower, a longer driving range, and all-wheel drive powered by two motors. The P85 D will out-accelerate just about anything running on dinosaur juice, but even the new, entry-level 70D feels quick and travels 240 miles on a charge.

Base price: \$76,200
(before tax rebates)

CADILLAC ELR



To compete more credibly with Tesla, Cadillac has amped up the performance of the ELR and cut its price by \$9,000. The plug-in hybrid can now accelerate to 60 mph in 6.4 seconds and has a stiffer suspension. Electric range is still just under 40 miles.

Base price: \$65,995
(before tax rebates)

MERCEDES-BENZ GLE-CLASS

If the M-Class was the luxury SUV for you, don't fret. The newly dubbed GLE hasn't deviated from Benz's reputation for comfort, quality, and well-engineered powertrains. Aside from the new name, the GLE is largely unchanged, save for a handsomely face-lifted front grille and LED taillights. New engine options include a torquey 3.0-liter, twin-turbo V-6 mated to a nine-speed automatic gearbox for the GLE400, as well as a smooth-driving GLE550e plug-in hybrid with about 30 miles of all-electric range. For better or worse,

Mercedes also decided to finally challenge the BMW X6 with its own GLE Coupe. Available with either a 362-hp, twin-turbo V-6 in the GLE450 AMG or a behemoth 577-hp, 5.5-liter twin-turbo V-8 in the GLE63 S AMG, the GLE Coupe prioritizes fun and flair over function (and visibility). Not convinced? The GLE Coupe is as silly as it is surprisingly satisfying to drive, particularly if you have the fat stacks to enjoy the delicious exhaust note from AMG's hand-built V-8.

Base price: \$52,025



JAGUAR F-PACE



The midsize crossover market is growing so big and profitable that Jaguar can no longer leave it entirely to its cousins at Land Rover. With aluminum construction and turbo- and supercharged engines, the F-Pace aims at the sportier side of the luxury crossover segment. Its plush interior and its driving performance should rival the Porsche Macan. Although the F-Pace will use some off-roading technology from Land Rover, Jaguar stresses the F-Pace will be meant primarily for paved roads.

Base price: \$50,000 (est)

BMW X5 M AND X6 M

Still a dumb idea—uselessly large, excessively expensive and, even with a promised 20 percent improvement in fuel economy, not terribly efficient. Yet few dumb ideas are as well thought out. The 4.4-liter twin-turbo V-8 now puts out 567 hp. More important, the suspension has been sorted with beefier brakes and stiffer

bushings. New summer performance tires grip hard during aggressive driving yet ride better than the run-flats on the last car. A torque-vectoring rear differential still makes the X5 and X6 M rotate like an oversized Mitsubishi Evo under throttle.

Base price:
\$99,650/\$103,050



UNSUNG HEROES

The person who prepares your Lexus

CHRIS BRUNNER

General Manager

Lexus Park Place; Plano, Texas

We have a team of people in our shop here at the dealership that does our PDI: pre-delivery inspection. The first thing, they wash the car. The Lexus still has laminated plastic on it, and this not only cleans the car but also makes sure that the plastic comes off easier. They check the interior for water leaks. Then they set the navigational system's compass and enter the dealership's address to have a reference for future service. They enter our list of 18 radio stations into the presets for the audio system. They set up the window and seat routines, so the driver seat will fully retract when you open the door to climb in. They check the interior trim and leather upholstery for any blemishes.

Then they open the hood, hook up the battery, and get a printout of its performance, since electrics are such a critical part of modern cars. They check the levels of windshield washing fluid, plus engine coolant and oil. They make sure the trunk is clean. Then they put the car on a lift and make sure that all the body plugs are in place, because sometimes they can drop out during shipment from the assembly plant. They check tire pressure. They hook the car into our diagnostics machine to check the systems. Finally they sign off on a form that includes their name and the number of the vehicle. It's a 90-minute process.

As told to Michael Jordan

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18



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Axis Model Five
20



Axis MS
21 for Tesla



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ventus V12 evo²

Max Performance Summer

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Directional Tread Design

Notched shoulders and 3D intermediate ribs flanking a continuous center rib promote dry handling and traction.



Aqua Jet Lateral Grooves

Promote efficient water evacuation from the center of the tire's contact patch to enhance hydroplaning resistance and wet traction.



ventus S1 noble²

Ultra High Performance All-Season

A sophisticated asymmetric tread design features notched outboard shoulders, intermediate and center ribs to bring together impressive ultra high performance in dry and wet conditions with all-season traction in light snow.



Dynapro HP2

Crossover/SUV Touring All-Season

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Call or visit www.tirerack.com/hankook for up-to-date sizes and pricing.



DODGE VIPER ACR

You might think there's no future for the

Viper in a world of 707-horsepower Charger and Challenger Hellcats. But for now the Dodge Viper—gosh, it feels good to be able to write “Dodge” again—lives on and becomes even more capable. The ACR is the most potent street-legal Viper yet thanks to coil-over Bilstein dampers, custom-developed Kumho tires, and a racing alignment developed at tracks around the country. In the name of weight loss, the ACR also comes with lightweight carpeting, a three-speaker audio system, and manual seats.

A 645-hp V-10 sits as strong as ever under the long hood. “We’re not going to put an iron-block Hellcat [V-8] with 200 [extra] pounds over the front wheels of the Viper,” says Dodge and SRT president and CEO Tim Kuniskis. An optional Extreme Aero Package adds an adjustable, dual-element carbon-fiber rear wing (73.9 inches wide), a rear carbon-fiber diffuser, a detachable front splitter, additional dive planes, and removable louvers. The ACR indeed looks extreme, and it seems to say to all those Hellcats, “I’m still the most devilish of them all.”

Base price: \$122,490





AUDI R8



If you love the Lamborghini Huracán (we sure do) but only have Porsche 911 Carrera GTS money, you'll want to check out the new R8. Power is supplied by Audi's naturally aspirated 5.2-liter V-10, which is shared with the Lambo and paired with a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic. Base output is 540 hp; the Plus model makes 610 hp. (We're still awaiting word whether the all-electric e-tron variant, with 456 hp and a claimed 280-mile range, will reach the U.S.) If you're looking for the frantically revving 4.2-liter V-8 and notchy gated manual shifter, search the used-car market. Audi engineers pulled some 110 pounds out of the new car while using the same basic architecture as the outgoing R8. Visually, the new R8 sharpens most of the original R8's lines but makes a less dramatic impact. The interior makes up for it, however, with stunning elements such as the configurable, 12.3-inch TFT instrument panel, classy double-stitched leather, and aluminum accents.

Base price: \$160,000 (est)

ACURA NSX



To be taken seriously these days, every auto company must have a high-tech supercar, so it's no surprise Acura revived the NSX. It is a surprise that the formerly conservative-looking car now measures up against the mid-engine competition in terms of style. Acura's design studio in Los Angeles met extreme demands for aerodynamics and heat extraction—there are no fewer than 10 cooling units—without sacrificing looks. The powertrain is complicated even by the standards of this

segment: A twin-turbo V-6 powers the rear wheels through a nine-speed dual-clutch transmission, while a rear-mounted electric motor provides supplemental power to the rear wheels for quicker response. Two more electric motors power the front wheels to improve handling. The last surprise, at least for those who still judge cars by their origin, is that the "Japanese" Acura NSX was designed and developed in America and will be built in America, too. (Take that, Ford GT.)

Base price: \$150,000 (est)

MERCEDES-AMG GT S



AMG characterizes the GT S as the better behaved, more affordable offspring of the SLS Gullwing, but make no mistake: It's still wild. Like the SLS, it's ostentatious and extremely powerful, with a boisterous 503-hp V-8. Also like the SLS, it's cramped and hard to see out of. It lacks the perfect precision of its bogey, the Porsche 911 Turbo, but that's all part of the fun. (AMG dismisses the 911 as "too clean.") The GT S is on sale now. A cheaper GT variant, making 456 hp, goes on sale for about \$110,000 next spring.

Base price: \$130,825

PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS



Porsche's most radical 911 is all about emotions. Taking it to its limits is not a dance with death as in super-911s of yore—clever aerodynamics and massive Michelins tame its 500-hp flat-six—but the RS is still much more involving than cars with similar performance. It's also sold out. You'll have to wait for the cheaper, manual-transmission variant rumored for next year.

Base price: \$176,895

UNSUNG HEROES

The person who came up with the chrome strips in the headlamps of the 1958 Corvette

ROBERT CUMBERFORD

Stylist, Chevrolet Studio
General Motors Styling Section

In the spring of 1956 I was involved in multiple Corvette designs, working simultaneously on the SS racing car, the very early split-backlight C-2, Jerry Earl's SR-2, and (thanks to being in design director Harley Earl's good graces at the moment) the face-lift of the Corvette for 1958. Mr. Earl wanted little cap-style visors over the four headlamps like the 1958 Chevy then underway. I was certain that would slow the car tremendously because of aero drag and suggested four lamps smoothly faired into the fenders. Mr. Earl, in his distinctive vocal accent and style, said to me, "Now, Bhwbab, that'll look like a baby's ass, donchugree?" You always 'greed with Mr. Earl, but I had an alternative. I said, "What if I put a chrome strip in between the lights and down the top of the fender, sir?" To make this even more palatable, I put in a little shield-shaped lamp on the strip. That did it, although it also inspired Earl to add garish twin chrome strips on the rear decklid. It was a bad idea but worth it to save overall aerodynamic efficiency, I thought. And after one year, they were removed anyway. Chrome solved all styling problems in those days, and the '58-'62 Corvettes were about 15-20 mph faster with "baby bottoms."

As told by Robert Cumberford

McLAREN 570S

The 570S is an accessible McLaren

in more ways than one. It'll cost some 80 grand less than the 650S, is easier to get in and out of, and has aluminum body panels that are cheaper to repair than composite pieces. Don't start thinking, though, that the 570S isn't a supercar. With a 562-hp, twin-turbocharged V-8 engine, it can go from 0 to 60 mph in about 3 seconds and will top out at 204 mph.

Base price: \$187,400



BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT

Bentley has managed the impossible:

It made its Continental uncomfortable. Well, at least in GT3-R guise. More super than even the previous Supersports, the GT3-R rides stiffly on 21-inch wheels. A twin-turbo V-8—that's right, not the W-12—makes 572 hp. The car has shed some 220 pounds, thanks in part to standard carbon-ceramic brake rotors. That leaves 4,839 pounds, so it's not a Lotus Elise, but it is the liveliest Continental yet. It's also the liveliest looking, available only in white with green stripes.

Most well-off Bentley buyers will fare better with the more conventional Continental GT, which has been refreshed with sharper fenders, a smaller grille, and a more aerodynamic rear end. The W-12 engine now makes 582 hp, 15 hp more than before, but the Continental GT V8 is still the one we'd spend our money on (had we chosen a more lucrative career).

Base price: \$201,225





ROLLS-ROYCE GHOST SERIES II

Nearly every panel has been redesigned, resulting in a car that looks, well, pretty much the same. Yes, this is still a Rolls, but it is bolder and more involving than before. The twin-turbo V-12 responds instantly to throttle inputs, and an optional sport suspension and steering package bring precision to the proceedings. Yet the reason to buy a Ghost over a less expensive sedan like a Mercedes-Maybach S600 still comes down to prestige and the knowledge that you can afford the best of the best.



Base price: \$291,350



FERRARI 488 GTB

The 488 GTB is the newest mid-engine, “entry-level” Ferrari, continuing a line that dates back to the Dino 206 GT of the late 1960s through the much-loved 458 Italia. The lineage for mid-engine, turbocharged Ferraris is a bit thinner—the 488 is the first since the F40 that debuted in 1987. Its twin-turbo, 3.9-liter V-8 develops 660 hp at 8,000 rpm; the 458’s naturally aspirated 4.5-liter unit needed 9,000 rpm to dish up 562 hp. The new engine is also more efficient. Progress comes at a cost of the old engine’s intoxicating wail and instantaneous throttle response, but let’s not be

overly dramatic: The 488 still sounds delicious and revs so quickly that the LED shift lights on the steering wheel rarely have time to rest. It also feels more agile and light-footed than the 458—and, by extension, just about everything else on the road—yet also feels less liable to bite back if you exceed its limits. It’s even relatively practical as it’s easier to climb into and more comfortable once you’re settled in. While this Ferrari is less emotional than the one it replaces, it is undeniably better.

Base price: \$245,000 (est)

UNSUNG HEROES

The person who created the Starlight Headliner

ALAN SHEPPARD

Head of Colour, Materials, and Accessories
Rolls-Royce Motor Cars

To create a strong emotional response, we started researching how to get ambient light from the headliner. Several methods, including trying to weave light fibers directly into a headliner, didn’t function how we wanted and were less than satisfactory in terms of quality. We wanted a more romantic atmosphere with a slightly natural feeling, so what better than a night sky? The \$14,000 Starlight Headliner that’s available now in the hardtop Phantoms and Wraith has 1,600 fiber-optic elements. They are positioned by hand, because stars are not evenly distributed; it’s sort of a planned randomness. The delicate build process takes about one day per headliner. Each fiber-optic guide is trimmed and angled to slightly vary the amount of light coming from each “star.” It can’t be too even; you want a sense of depth. One slip—a botched hole in the leather, a crack in one of the glass fibers during installation—and the headliner is scrapped. We had to fight for the Starlight Headliner to make it to production, and now it’s a bigger success than we ever imagined. It’s an icon, and 10 years after first showing it off, it still has an awe-inspiring effect. The Starlight Headliner has a future. It’ll go on and get better, and it’s wonderful to be part of that.

As told to Christopher Nelson



LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR LP 750-4 SUPERVELOCE

Say the name out loud and tell us you don't want one. It sounds old-school Lambo. It looks old-school Lambo, too. The brash aero addenda might be there for genuine performance gains, but they also stimulate the 8-year-old in all of us. Start the 740-hp, 6.5-liter V-12, and a big, dirty noise erupts. Good thing there are

giant carbon-ceramic rotors to slow things down. The standard Aventador is by no means a slouch, but the Superveloce (SV), which loses 110 pounds and adds magnetorheological dampers, feels more agile and much more in tune with driver inputs. Lift off the throttle mid-corner, and the rear end starts to swing wide. It's

edgy at first, but soon you learn that the Aventador isn't going to spin you off into the sticks. Instead, it's helping you scribe the neatest, fastest line around any given corner. Unlike the SVs of yore, this monster has been engineered to show some civility.

Base price: \$493,095

MERCEDES-AMG G65



Twelve cylinders and two turbos combine to make 621 hp and 738 lb-ft of torque. Think on that for a second, then factor in three locking differentials and '70s styling. The G65 is sure to leave a wake when it hits U.S. shores. Let's just hope we avoid flattening its side pipes when we get out on our favorite trails.

Base price: \$218,825

FORD GT

Much like the original 1960s Ford GT40, the all-new GT is a street-legal Le Mans race car. It's low, wide, and absolutely breathtaking, with a teardrop-shaped, carbon-fiber driver cell flanked by aggressive, air-channeling body structures formed out of composites and aluminum. With a mid-mounted, twin-turbo V-6 engine, a seven-speed dual-clutch transaxle, a racing-derived pushrod suspension, and a price tag just south of a half-million dollars, the Ford GT will no doubt restart the fight with Ferrari that the original GT40 instigated all those years ago.

Base price: \$400,000 (est)





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Preaching



**Mazda's
all-new
2016 MX-5
satisfies
the Miata
faithful,
and to that
we say
'Hallelujah'**

I really want to drive the 2016 Mazda MX-5 Miata. But first, I need to catch it in my 1993 Miata.

The new Miata's tires fling pebbles at my windshield. My car's 1.6-liter engine, which has turned more than 131,000 miles, revs past 6,000 rpm, momentarily drowning out the note of the new Miata's 2.0-liter as I bound over a crest and cut a corner like Alex Zanardi in an effort to keep pace. Glancing for a split second at my rearview mirror, I see more old-school Miatas in pursuit.

to the Choir

By David Zenlea | Photography by Michael Shaffer

These

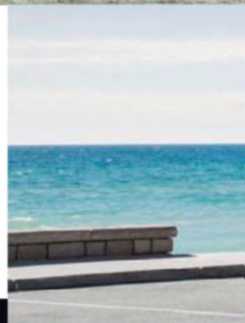
are our cars, in both a spiritual sense—the MX-5 embodies *Automobile's* “No Boring Cars” slogan—and a literal one, since several staff members own Miatas. And so, when a U.S.-spec 2016 MX-5 Miata Grand Touring arrives in Michigan on a Monday morning, it meets Detroit bureau chief Todd Lassa in his 2008 Miata, daily news editor Jake Holmes in his '97, and me in my '93. Daily news editor Eric Weiner does not own a Miata—he's like that fifth dentist who does not recommend your toothpaste—but volunteers to pilot the new car when we rotate out of it and hop back into our own Mazdas. “Great, that

means I'll have to spend most of the time in your little crapwagons,” he realizes. We all want to determine whether this MX-5, only the fourth new one in 25 years, is still our Miata.

It looks the part, without really trying to. This car shrugs off most of the classic cues—no squarish taillamps, few chrome touches, and certainly no flip-up headlamps. Whereas the old Miatas seem to glance over their shoulders at vintage European roadsters, this one, with its anime face and origami surfacing, looks modern and proudly Japanese. And yet, there's no mistaking a car this size for anything but a Miata. It's smaller than Lassa's 2008 and falls within an inch or so of the original in every dimension save width, where it has gained almost 2.5 inches. Some will



Wouldn't you just love to be a fly on the wall as journalists debate whose Miata is best? It's almost as exciting as listening to Diane Rehm slowly read several recipes for bundt cake.





be sorry to hear it's still cute. Our photographer can't suppress a laugh when I sound the horn, a falsetto "Meep! Meep! Meep!"

To give everyone quality time behind the wheel, we head for Michigan's hilly, scenic Leelanau Peninsula. Some 280 miles northwest of Detroit, it's quite a distance to cover in three old roadsters bearing scars accumulated across a combined 450,000 miles. The 2016 car

presents its own worry: "Please keep aware that these are preproduction vehicles with a rather limited parts supply," e-mails the not-at-all-worried Mazda public relations specialist. But these are Miatas, aren't they? We lower our tops, lather on sunscreen, don dweeby-looking hats, and head off.

The first revelation that comes from sitting in a new Miata is how non-revelatory it feels. Certainly, Mazda

materials and switchgear have come up in the world, and none of our old Miatas has a touchscreen or click-wheel controller. But my right foot instantly recognizes the spacing between the firm brake pedal and throttle, and my left elbow props comfortably on the doorsill. Lassa, whose third-gen hardtop is the most grown-up Miata, complains there is not as much storage space in the cockpit. "Disappointed by the lack of a good old-fashioned glove box," he says, noting how the compensatory cubby between the seats is awkward to access. Still it seems a small price to pay for such a delightfully intimate cabin. A Porsche Boxster feels like a truck in comparison.

The second revelation is how quick the car is. I chirp the tires from a stop and beam ahead of the first-gen cars when I hit a passing zone. Miatas sold elsewhere will offer a 1.5-liter, 128-hp base engine, but for the United States it only comes with a 2.0-liter, 155-hp four-cylinder. It feels faster than Lassa's car despite 11 fewer horses and a taller final-drive ratio. Credit the low curb weight—around 2,330 pounds for manual transmission models—and an impressive (for a Miata) 148 lb-ft of torque. "The 2.0-liter engine's torque, combined with the impressive 34 mpg it gets on the highway, make it the right engine for our market," opines Lassa, who previewed the Japanese-market car earlier in the year.

The engine sits farther back in the new Miata, which contributes to a livelier character at the limit. Dialing

Wield Your Club

THE TRACK JUNKIE'S MIATA

Miatas are typically bought by two types of people: those who want a fun, sporty convertible to drive around town and those who want a fun, sporty convertible to carve up back roads and racetracks. In the past, people in those two groups often bought the same car. At least some of the go-fast goodies, such as a limited-slip differential, were available only on fully

loaded, top-flight Miatas, which were also bogged down with weighty nonessentials. With the 2016 Miata, Mazda differentiates the Club model from the base and top-spec versions by making it the only one available with a limited-slip differential, stiffer Bilstein dampers, sportier springs, and a front strut tower brace. Club model buyers can also select an exclusive



\$3,400 package that equips the car with Brembo front brakes and 17-inch BBS aluminum wheels. Side- and rear-bumper skirts are also included and

complement the Club's standard front air dam and rear lip spoiler. Though the Club does not offer all of the Grand Touring model's niceties, it's far from being a

"stripper" variant. An infotainment system, red accent stitching, a Bose audio system, and air-conditioning come standard. The Club is a blast to drive thanks in

part to stiffer springs that remain compliant enough for day-to-day driving. The larger Brembos don't improve stopping distances, but their increased pad area keeps them cooler longer. They also are easier to modulate, requiring a firmer shove before they really work hard. And of course, the limited-slip differential helps put the power down better coming out of tight switchbacks.

-Rory Jurnecka

MAZDA WON'T COMMENT ON WHETHER A HARDTOP MODEL WILL RETURN, BUT GIVEN ITS POPULARITY—60 PERCENT OF BUYERS OPTED FOR ONE IN 2015—WE CAN'T BELIEVE ONE IS NOT IN THE WORKS.



into the first of many turns along our route, the back end kicks out momentarily, something that never happens in my car. “More like a Boxster than anything Miata drivers are used to,” confirms Lassa. Rest assured, the Mazda hasn’t become a widow-maker. We all feel comfortable disabling stability control, which, in any event, rarely intervenes during spirited driving. Body control, even on this plush Grand Touring model, is much improved over the last-generation car and feels like the stiffer-than-stock suspensions Holmes and I installed on our first-gen examples. Only, the new car doesn’t make you wince over every road imperfection. “Your car didn’t like those train tracks back there,” says Weiner. In the new car, I hadn’t even noticed there were train tracks.

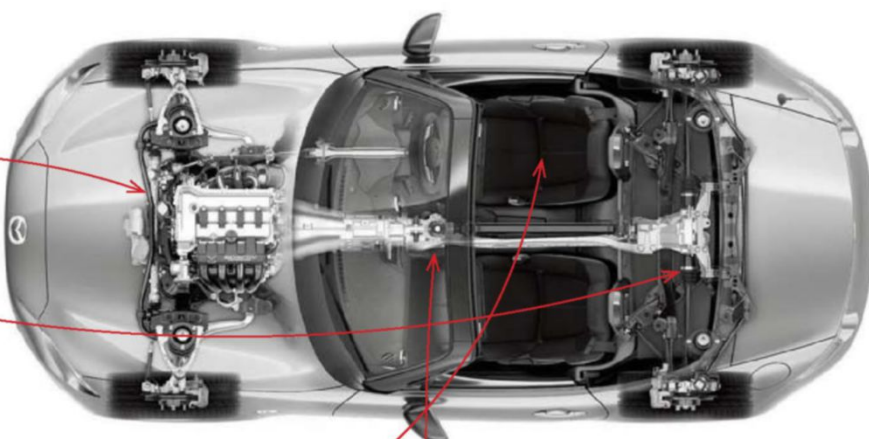
It’s late afternoon by the time we hit the best stretch, a winding 13-mile loop around Glen Lake. Most modern sports cars would trample this road with their fat tires and powerful engines. The Miata converses with it. The electrically assisted steering loads up naturally, much like the hydraulically assisted steering in the older cars. (Mazda says it tried manual racks but found them unworkably heavy.) Steep hills require one or two

Under the Skin

We didn’t expect Mazda to reimagine the Miata but rather improve upon what it got right three times before. That’s exactly what it did.

1. The all-new Miata shares the same basic 2.0-liter I-4 engine with the Mazda3, with a few key changes. It is tuned for premium fuel, providing improved throttle response, and its new intake and exhaust manifolds are fashioned for the change from front- to rear-drive duty. An electric vacuum pump replaces the Mazda3’s hydraulic pump, and the Mazda3’s plastic valve cover has been swapped with an aluminum one, purely for aesthetics.

2. Weight savings in the new Miata relative to the previous-gen car come from lots of places: the engine (18 pounds), suspension (26 pounds), transmission (15 pounds), and the body structure (46 pounds), which uses more high-tensile steel and aluminum than ever before. For the first time in a production Miata, the front fenders, convertible-top frame, and roll-over hoop structure are made from



aluminum. The result is a car that’s comparable in weight to the 1994-’97 1.8L Miata.

3. Mazda engineers made sure to mount heavier pieces lower in the car. The engine is mounted 0.5 inch lower in the chassis, the roof is 0.4 inch

lower, and the driver sits 0.8 inch lower than in the previous-gen car, all in the name of improved handling dynamics. The front and rear tracks are incrementally wider, too, and the engine sits almost a full inch farther back in the chassis to shift even more weight

toward the vehicle’s center. The Miata’s wheelbase is slightly shorter than before, and the dramatically shorter front and rear overhangs make the Mazda roadster look more planted than ever.

4. The gearbox has the same short throws as in

the third-generation Miata, but shift effort is lighter. A close-ratio gearbox with a 1.00:1 sixth gear cuts weight and friction, while the rear end gets a tall final-drive ratio for the sake of highway fuel economy.

-Rory Jurnecka

RIGHT-HAND-DRIVE SHOWN

The Specs

2016 MAZDA MX-5 GRAND TOURING

ON SALE:

Now

PRICE:

\$30,885/\$31,015 (base/as tested)

ENGINE:

2.0L DOHC 16-valve I-4/155 hp @ 6,000 rpm, 148 lb-ft @ 4,600 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

6-speed manual

LAYOUT:

2-door, 2-passenger, front-engine, RWD convertible

EPA MILEAGE:

27/34 mpg (city/hwy)

SUSPENSION F/R:

Control arms, coil springs/multilink, coil springs

BRAKES F/R:

Vented discs/solid discs

TIRES:

205/45R-17 Bridgestone Potenza

L x W x H:

154.1 x 68.3 x 48.8 in

WHEELBASE:

90.9 in

HEADROOM:

37.4 in

LEGROOM:

43.1 in

SHOULDER ROOM:

52.2 in

CARGO ROOM:

4.6 cu ft

WEIGHT:

2,332 lb

WEIGHT DIST. F/R:

53/47%

0-60 MPH:

5.8 sec (est)

1/4-MILE:

14.5 sec @ 94.2 mph (est)

TOP SPEED:

125 mph (est)

2008 MAZDA MIATA

BASE PRICE:

\$22,220

ENGINE:

2.0L DOHC 16-valve I-4/166 hp @ 6,700 rpm, 140 lb-ft @ 5,000 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

6-speed manual

LAYOUT:

2-door, 2-passenger, front-engine, RWD convertible

EPA MILEAGE:

21/28 mpg (city/hwy)

L x W x H:

157.3 x 67.7 x 49.4 in

WHEELBASE:

91.7 in

WEIGHT:

2,575 lb

0-60 MPH:

6.6 sec

1997 MAZDA MIATA

BASE PRICE:

\$20,000 (est)

ENGINE:

1.8L DOHC 16-valve I-4/133 hp @ 6,500 rpm, 114 lb-ft @ 5,500 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

5-speed manual

LAYOUT:

2-door, 2-passenger, front-engine, RWD convertible

EPA MILEAGE:

20/26 mpg (city/hwy)

L x W x H:

155.4 x 65.9 x 48.2 in

WHEELBASE:

89.2 in

WEIGHT:

2,293 lb

0-60 MPH:

7.9 sec

1993 MAZDA MIATA

BASE PRICE:

\$16,450

ENGINE:

1.6L DOHC 16-valve I-4/116 hp @ 6,500 rpm, 100 lb-ft @ 5,500 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

5-speed manual

LAYOUT:

2-door, 2-passenger, front-engine, RWD convertible

EPA MILEAGE:

21/27 mpg (city/hwy)

L x W x H:

155.4 x 65.9 x 48.2 in

WHEELBASE:

89.2 in

WEIGHT:

2,222 lb

0-60 MPH:

8.9 sec



downshifts. “A lot of fun because the shifter and clutch are so good,” says Holmes. The suspension compresses just enough when turning into a corner for you to feel the forces at work. We chase each other through the trees, the old cars scrambling madly in the new car’s wake like a pack of wound-up puppies. For all the effort involved, the Miatas probably look pretty slow. They are slow. A Miata driven well, however, reveals the joy that comes from really driving.

We indulge in this joy through the long, warm evening. The next morning is far less kind. A cold, damp breeze blows off Lake Michigan, and we raise our tops reluctantly. The new Miata’s roof,

although operated manually, requires hardly any effort, gliding into place with a mere flick of the wrist. In this sense, the power retractable hardtop offered for the last generation seems completely unnecessary. On the other hand, Lassa’s 2008 Miata with the power retractable hardtop suffers noticeably less wind noise around 50 mph than does the new car, even though the Grand Touring receives extra insulation. Mazda won’t comment on whether a hardtop model will return, but given its popularity—60 percent of buyers opted for one in 2015—we can’t believe one is not in the works.

Of course, if consumer demand were the primary driver behind the new

Miata’s development, it probably wouldn’t exist. The same number of years now separate us from the first Miata as separated the first Miata from the Lotus Elan, and a lot has changed in that time. Nowadays, most people with \$30,000 to spend want something with a raised suspension, and they’re probably too preoccupied with their phones to enjoy the wind in their hair. “We may never see another new Miata,” Holmes remarks.

For now, though, it’s a new day. We lower our tops again as the sun rises and wrap around the last few curves in our Miatas, more than satisfied with our club’s newest member. ■

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Tailgate shown

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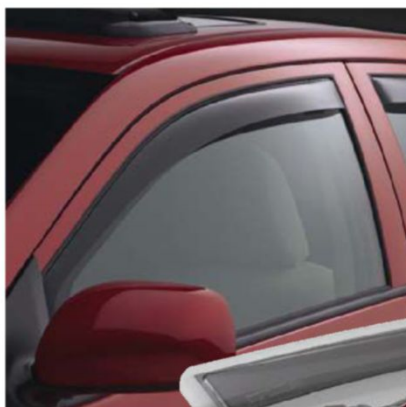
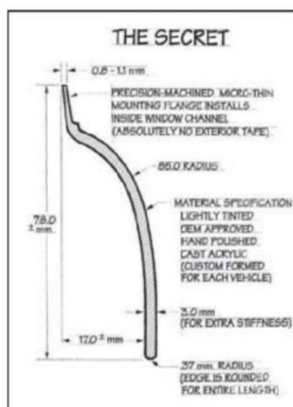
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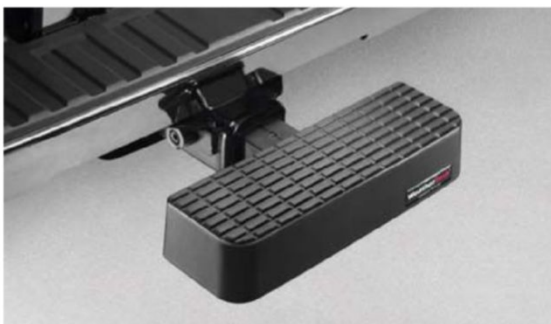
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A still life photograph of a desk with a green lamp, a glass of amber liquid, and a cigar in an ashtray.

THE 36-24-35 AMX

PLAYMATE PINK AMC RESURRECTED AFTER 45 YEARS

Everyone knows Playboy magazine spearheaded the sexual revolution of the 1960s and published some of the era's best-known authors in its heyday. But what readers really go to Playboy for—let's be honest—are the pictorials of some of the world's most beautiful women.

Beginning in 1964, the most beautiful of the world's most beautiful women, the Playmate of the Year, was gifted a new car as part of her prize package. Donna Michelle was the first recipient, scoring a 1964½ Ford Mustang. In pink. And a tradition was born.

This brings us to the 1968 AMC AMX in Playmate Pink you see in this pictorial, a car billed by many in the enthusiast community as one of the most historically significant cars produced by American Motors.

At the time, American Motors Corporation (AMC) was the fourth-largest automobile manufacturer in

the U.S. and was struggling under the weight of competition from the Big Three. AMC's first stab at a pony-car, the midsize Rambler Marlin introduced in 1965, was a dismal sales failure. It followed up with the Javelin, which fared better thanks in part to a clever ad campaign.

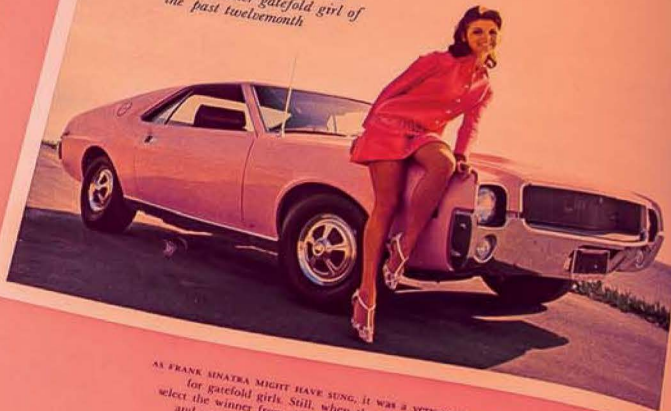
The Javelin spawned the AMX, a two-seat version of the Javelin with a foot cut from its wheelbase. It was distinctive, with massive rear sail panels that lent it a look unlike any car on the road at the time. Like the Javelin, the AMX was styled under the direction of AMC's legendary design vice president Richard "Dick" Teague, and during its three-year run—a little more than 19,000 were built—the AMX quickly gained a reputation as a competent performance machine. At the time it was considered a foil for the Corvette and is now a highly collectible car from the muscle-car era.

By Richard Truesdell



PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR

*September delight angela dorian
reigns as the premier gatefold girl of
the past twelvemonth*



AS FRANK SINATRA MIGHT HAVE SUNG, it was a very good year for gatefold girls. Still, when the time came to select the winner from the past dozen, the multitiered and stunningly structured Angela Dorian made us by Angela that we needed no tie-breaking assistance from PLAYBOY's readers (a write-in contest in 1963, 1965 and 1967). Even so, our unanimous actress Angela number one in the Playmate pantheon. "Quite a few of the letters were from guys stationed in Vietnam," she told us. "I only wish I could visit them all and thank each one personally. I may be too much of a pacifist to accept the reasons why they're fighting, but I'm too much of a woman not to want to help boost their morale." Angela has had hardly an idle moment since her September unveiling. In addition to extracurricular endeavors (writing poetry, dancing, composing songs and doing pen sketches), she has recently helped her cinematic career by completing a featured role in Roman Polanski's suspense thriller *Rosemary's Baby*, starring Mia Farrow and John Cassavetes. It's the start of a seven-year contract with Paramount Pictures, calling for two films a year. "It's nonexclusive," Angella is quick to state. "I want to be available whenever a good script comes along." She has also added to her two-dozen-plus smallscreen appearances by playing Florence of Arabia, a bejeweled belly dancer who undulated on the set too late (text concluded on page 206)



Displaying a well-rounded fashion flair, Angela believes that "clothes are a reflection of your personality and, especially, imagination. Sticking to one style. We believe that draping her multi curves with mod skirt would perpetuate



The "36-24-35" plaque in the Playmate Pink '68 AMC AMX given to bunny Victoria Vetri reflects the length, in inches, around the model's chest, waist, and hips, respectively. Wow.



To introduce the AMX to its dealers, AMC held meetings at nine Playboy Clubs, which had sprouted up across the country during the expansion of Hugh Hefner's Playboy Enterprises empire. As part of its plan to promote the car, AMC arranged for its all-new AMX to be awarded to the 1968 Playmate of the Year, who turned out to be September 1967's Playmate of the Month Angela Dorian, whose real name is Victoria Vetri.

Vetri's AMX was well-optioned and came equipped with the car's base 4.8-liter V-8 mated to AMC's optional floor-shifter, three-speed automatic transmission. It also had power brakes, power steering, chrome Magnum 500 wheels, an AM radio, an eight-track tape player, and factory-installed air-conditioning. But aside from the pink hue, what made this AMX truly unique was the number plate on the glove-box door. While every other AMX has a sequential build number, Vetri's car instead sported her measurements, 36-24-35.

Before and after her tenure as 1968's Playmate of the Year, Vetri enjoyed moderate success as an actress, with her best-known role in the 1968 Roman Polanski-directed "Rosemary's Baby." After that, Vetri flew under the radar for the better part of four decades in Southern California, where she later married and became Victoria Rathgeb. She eventually had the AMX painted brown, then gray, and finally black—partially in an effort to avoid stalkers.

After owning the car for 42 years, Rathgeb decided to part with it. By that time it had gotten pretty banged up. It was put up for sale on consignment at a local service station and later resold to a used-car sales lot. There it caught the eye of AMX enthusiast Mark Melvin,



who has owned a red 1969 AMX for 38 years, a present to himself when he graduated from high school in 1977.

Melvin negotiated the deal directly, placing a deposit on the car and returning several days later to haul his new treasure home. Shortly after, he invited

several of his friends in the AMC community over to see the AMX. "After looking the car over thoroughly, one person estimated it might cost as much as \$25,000 to restore," Melvin says. "Oh, how I wish that had turned out to be true!" Melvin estimates he spent nearly double that amount to get the car back to its original condition.

Like the AMX, Rathgeb had experienced her share of hard times and would eventually do hard time as a result. Shortly after Melvin purchased the car, Rathgeb shot her husband in the back in an apparent fit of jealous rage and later pleaded no contest to attempted voluntary manslaughter. She was sentenced to nine years in prison in September 2011.

As Rathgeb sat in prison, the beat-up



AMX sat in Melvin's garage while he assembled the parts needed to restore the car. Already aware of its provenance (Melvin has had it verified through the records of the California Division of Motor Vehicles and is in possession of the car's original registration), there was never any doubt he would restore it with its original paint color, Playmate Pink.

The restoration finally got underway in July 2012, with Melvin getting help from several members and close friends in the Southern California AMC community.

"My good friends Allen [Tyler] and John [Siciliano] were instrumental in making this car's restoration happen," Melvin says. "I could not have had all this work done as quickly with this quality if it had been done elsewhere. To illustrate the speed of Allen's work, on the day we got the car off the rotisserie and back on the ground I would have been happy with just that for the day. As soon as we accomplished that feat, Allen said, 'Oh, let's go get the engine and put it in too.' It was a team effort all the way."

Over the course of the next 30 months, the small team restored the car at Tyler's house. Seemingly every corner of the AMX had been hit. No new original sheetmetal was available for the rear quarters, so Tyler had to repair the original panels himself. The final fit and finish is testimony to his skills as a body man.

After the restoration was completed this spring, the car received some attention on the Web, which led to it making an appearance on "Jay Leno's Garage," its unofficial coming-out party. The official unveiling came recently at Melvin's own SoCal AMX Car Show.

"It took a lot of effort to pull this project together," says Melvin, who has taken a great deal of pride in the fruits of the restoration effort. "I had to take out a loan against the value of my house to complete the project, but I feel it's money well spent. The Playmate AMX is considered by many as one of the most historically significant cars ever built by AMC. And with its direct connection to Victoria, it certainly carries a great deal of notoriety."

Asked if he's spoken with Rathgeb recently, Melvin is evasive but left us with this: "That would be some news story to pick up the Playmate when she's released from prison in 2019." We can only imagine what she'd think, seeing the car exactly as it was when AMC's R.W. "Bill" McNealy handed her the keys back in 1968. ■

“I HAD TO TAKE OUT A LOAN AGAINST THE VALUE OF MY HOUSE TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT, BUT I FEEL IT'S MONEY WELL SPENT.”

PINK SLIPS

Including Angela Dorian and her AMC AMX, Playboy gave pink cars to 10 bunnies. Here are a few of our favorites.



1964: Donna Michelle, the first Playmate of the Year to get a pink car—a 1964½ Ford Mustang convertible with a 260-cubic-inch V-8—got other pink swag as well, including custom luggage, a full wardrobe, and a Honda 50 motorcycle.



1966: Allison Parks, who got a 1966 Dodge Charger, told Playboy she was 21 when she posed for her pictorial. She was actually 24 and a mother of two, and both of her kids were featured in the pictorial, identified as swimming school students.



1972: Liv Lindeland is Norwegian, De Tomaso was Italian, and the mid-mounted, 351-cubic-inch Ford V-8 in Lindeland's 1972 Pantera was American—three disparate heritages that looked damn good together.



1975: Marilyn Lange got a pink 1975 Porsche 911 S with a rear-mounted, 157-hp flat-six. Her 911 S was the last pink car Playboy gave out but the first of eight Porsches given to subsequent Playmates.

Archival material from *Playboy* magazine. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

Does this modern Mustang still have muscle?

We'll find out if Ford's turbo-'Stang is a real ponycar



WHEN WORD FIRST SPREAD

through the ranks at *Automobile* that we'd be welcoming a 2015 Ford Mustang into our Four Seasons stable, daydreams of roaring down Woodward Avenue in Detroit and along Mulholland Drive in L.A. started to take shape. Some were filled with plumes of tire smoke, some cruising along the California coast at sunset, but all similar to scenes in the movie "Gone in 60 Seconds." (Our more seasoned editors dream of the 1974 version; our younger editors know only the 2000 remake with Nicolas Cage.)

Then, a thunderclap. We've decided that our fantasy's soundtrack will not play to the tune of a Coyote V-8 but instead the whoosh and whine of the turbo-four in the 2015 Mustang EcoBoost.

Call us crazy, foolish, or maybe even sacrilegious, but of all the great improvements to the 2015 Mustang—from its handsomely contemporary sheetmetal to its upgraded interior and independent rear suspension—the new 2.3-liter EcoBoost engine under the hood remains the biggest question mark. Can the turbocharged four-cylinder Mustang live up to the standards of its storied nameplate?

With 310 hp and 320 lb-ft of

ON SALE:

Now

PRICE:

\$30,125/\$36,700
(base/as tested)

ENGINE:

2.3L 16-valve DOHC
turbocharged I-4/
310 hp @ 5,500 rpm,
320 lb-ft @ 3,000 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

6-speed manual

LAYOUT:

2-door, 4-passenger,
front-engine,
RWD coupe

EPA MILEAGE:

22/31 mpg (city/hwy)

L x W x H:

188.3 x 75.4 x 54.4 in

WHEELBASE:

107.1 in

WEIGHT:

3,532 lb

0-60 MPH:

5.6 sec (est)

TOP SPEED:

145 mph

torque, the Mustang's EcoBoost engine is a leap forward past the base model car's V-6, which has 300 hp and 280 lb-ft of torque. We've made sure that we're going to enjoy the extra performance as much as possible, opting for the six-speed manual transmission, Recaro leather bucket seats (\$1,595), and EcoBoost Performance Pack (\$1,995). With 19-inch Pirelli summer-performance tires on black wheels, heavy-duty brakes, and unique suspension tuning, the whole package is a must-have for anyone thinking of heading out to the track.

But as much as the Mustang is about great driving, it's about driving in style as well. As such, we couldn't help but snag our pony in Ford's striking Competition Orange livery. And in Premium trim, our Four

Seasons ride also comes with satellite radio, the MyFord Touch interface with SYNC voice control, blind-spot monitoring, and a 12-speaker Shaker Pro audio system. Navigation tacks on an additional \$795 to the bottom line.

Will the 2015 Mustang's great looks, tight handling, generous torque, and respectable fuel economy be enough to keep us smiling in our daydreams? Or will we instead be jarred awake in a cold sweat, pedal to the mat, stretching our right leg and straining our ears for 5.0 liters and eight cylinders of American muscle that's just not there? We have 12 months from Woodward to Mulholland to find out if the Mustang EcoBoost has the heart of a thoroughbred or if it's better off in the glue factory. ■



The interior, while upfitted with new-age tech, is retro chic and nods to the ponycar's past with a "Mustang: Since 1964" plaque and a speedometer that reads "ground speed mph."

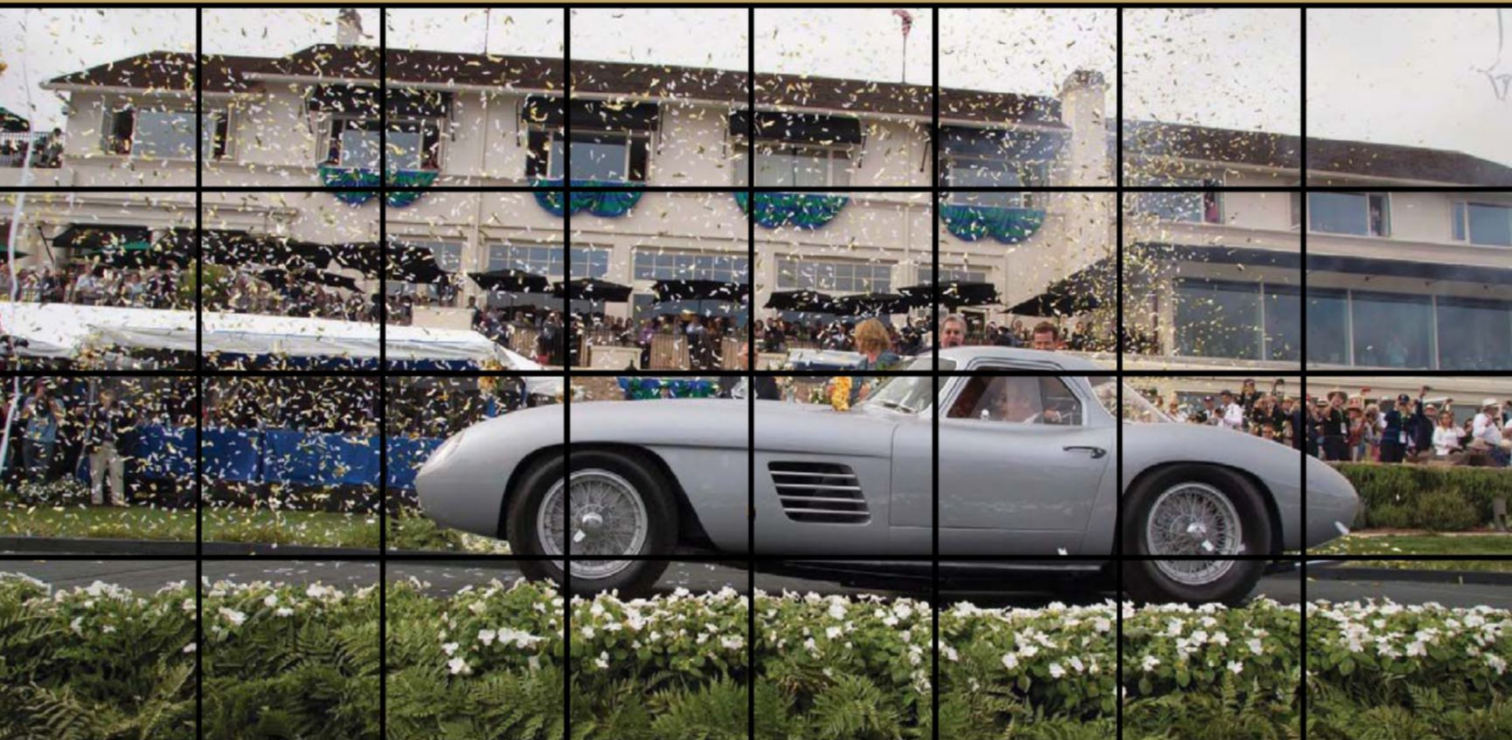


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BMW M235i

MILES TO DATE: **21,356**

1,905 The M235i's chassis is supple and benign, balancing playfulness and predictability. **7,363** "I like BMWs," senior editor David Zenlea says, "but I don't love BMWs and am not one of those people who can reel off chassis codes like catechism. After spending time with the M235i, though, I'm beginning to get it. What other automaker builds a compact rear-wheel-drive coupe that can comfortably cover 1,500 miles and kick ass on a racetrack in one weekend? The F22 2 Series could convert me." **9,120** With its aggressive stance and stylish brushed-aluminum caps for the outside mirrors, the M235i has understated sex appeal that whispers for your attention instead of screaming for it. **19,251** We visit TireRack.com to buy a set of wider, plus-one, 19-inch O.Z. Racing Leggera HLT wheels wrapped in Yokohama Advan Neova AD08R tires. Well worth \$3,115.72 because the M235i feels painted to the pavement while hustling around Grattan Raceway in Belding, Michigan.



Don't believe your doc: Biking isn't healthy for your heart. Ours is breaking, because a loaded bike rack prevents powersliding.



CADILLAC CTS VSPORT

MILES TO DATE: **19,252**



8,595 A quick right-left flick has the CTS Vsport sliding sideways around a roundabout. We make a full orbit around the circle before straightening out and going on our way.

10,645 We notice the Pirelli P Zero tires aren't wearing

evenly. Both fronts have sawtooth patterns on their outside edges and diagonal wear on the treads, a relatively common phenomenon in tires worn by high-hp, rear-wheel-drive vehicles.

Corner hard, and the acceleration force on a front tire

is actually at an angle to where the tread is pointing.

13,023 A fundamentally good vehicle crippled by awful features such as a malfunctioning electronic release on the glove box and an infuriatingly unintelligible infotainment system.

15,450 After several months, our recently departed Four Seasons Cadillac ATS developed a nasty rough idle. Seems our CTS Vsport has it, too, but worse.

FORD FIESTA ST

MILES TO DATE: **19,708**

7,934 Note to daily news editor Eric Weiner: Just because cars have rocker sills doesn't mean you can run over rocks. Buying, painting, and installing a new sill cost \$683.31.

13,208 Heel-and-toe shifting in the FIESTA is a pain. The gas pedal sits much closer to the firewall than the brake and clutch pedals, so we bought a 3D-printed, bolt-on plastic spacer (\$55) that moves the gas pedal upward into a better spot. Daily news editor Jake

Holmes calls the mod a "godsend" and says, "This is how the pedal box should come from the factory."

17,742 Wait, no tow hooks? The front bumper support on the Euro-spec Fiesta ST has a threaded bung to

screw a hook into, but the U.S.-spec car doesn't. Dumb, considering this is a track-day sweetheart. Some tracks won't let you run without one, since it makes life difficult if a tow off the circuit becomes necessary.



JEEP CHEROKEE LIMITED 4X4

MILES TO DATE: **18,300**



6,223 Adaptive cruise control, part of our Cherokee's \$2,155 Technology Group, is one of the best and simplest systems we've come across yet.

9,992 This Cherokee needs to look tougher, like it has even the tiniest cojones, so we hit up Mopar for some

accessories, including powder-coated steel rock rails (\$1,189), all-weather floor mats for the whole car (\$210), and a roadside emergency kit, which includes jumper cables, gloves, pliers, screwdrivers, bungee cords, and

a blanket (\$97).

12,954 The rock rails do their job, taking a few hard hits during weekend off-roading. The Cherokee does surprisingly well, considering it's not a Trailhawk.

13,518 Really, though, it's no Trailhawk. We follow the same two-track in a Trailhawk, have more fun, and go much faster, believing the Trailhawk's front skidplate will keep stumps and boulders from gouging the engine's oil pan.

SUBARU WRX PREMIUM

MILES TO DATE: **13,983**

9,008 Senior editor Chris Nelson: "The WRX convinces you that it could be a stage-ready wolf wrapped in sheep's clothing. Only it's not. It's a Venus flytrap that makes you think you're the

second coming of Colin McRae and gets you to live out rallying dreams on the street. It's my own damn fault for believing the lie." A busted left-rear quarter panel puts the WRX in the shop

for a few weeks, costing us \$3,474.93.

12,019 The stock brake pads get heat-soaked after just a few laps around a road course, so we spend \$216 on more resilient, aftermarket Hawk HPS pads. Much, much better.

12,832 The biggest difference between our WRX and a WRX STI? Immediacy. The STI's hydraulic steering feels quicker, its brakes grabber, and its shift throws shorter, but we'd still rather deal with the softer, tamer WRX day to day. ■





1990-2002 MERCEDES-BENZ SL-CLASS

Living the dream in Hollywood

If you had to pick one convertible to represent the 1990s, the Mercedes-Benz SL-Class would be the favorite based on its pop-culture profile alone. Cut to Clint

Eastwood and Charlie Sheen fearlessly driving a Mercedes 500SL through a couple of warehouse windows in “The Rookie” (1990), with all parties apparently emerging unscathed. “Engineered like no other car,” says Clint. See also William Hurt’s cocky surgeon in “The Doctor” (1991), who indelicately describes his 500SL’s electronically triggered pop-up roll bar as an aphrodisiac: “my electric roll-in-the-hay bar.” Even doomed rappers Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls were fellow aficionados of the SL-Class.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIA LA PALME

This wasn’t merely crass product placement; it was art imitating life. In Hollywood during the 1990s, if you wanted a top-dollar convertible with equal parts performance, prestige, and engineering excellence, there was the Mercedes-Benz SL, and there was everything else. Even today, this SL is a fixture in the movie business, the choice of aspiring screenwriters on the way up and of worn-out producers on the way down.

The secret to the SL’s appeal in Hollywood during the 1990s was the same formula that endures today. It delivers understated German luxury, reliable powertrains shared with the S-Class sedan (inline-six, V-8, and V-12 in this case), a standard power-operated canvas top, and an optional, externally fitted hardtop that makes the car as weather-tight as a coupe.



During an era when exotic cars were comparatively thin on the ground, this SL-Class was the most practical and easiest-to-drive sporting automobile you could buy.

When the fourth-generation SL (known by its engineering code, R129) came to market in the U.S. as a 1990 model, longtime Benz design chief Bruno Sacco singled it out as “the most perfect car” of his career.

The squat, long-nosed wedge retains much of its machismo today, particularly when it wears one of the two staggered-width, 18-inch wheel sets from AMG that were offered as options. Underneath, the R129 thankfully keeps a safe distance from the notoriously overengineered W140 S-Class sedan of the same vintage, sharing instead many platform and suspension components with the workhorse W124 E-Class. The R129 stands at the crossroads of the analog and digital worlds, incorporating just enough contemporary electronic



technology of our time to feel familiar, but not so much that you can't work on it yourself. Things will break, and parts are expensive, but fundamentally these cars were built to last. I know. In 2012 I bought a 1998 Mercedes-Benz SL500 with 67,000 miles on it that I still drive today.

Ultimately the R129's character is defined by what's under the hood.

The first question before you is whether you're open to the six-cylinder R129, known as either the 300SL (1990-1993) or the SL320 (1994-1997). The former uses a 3.0-liter, DOHC inline-six making 228 horsepower and 201 lb-ft of torque, while the latter has a 3.2-liter enhancement of the same engine with 228 hp but a much-improved 232 lb-ft. You can find some



WHY BUY?

It's all about the driving. And whether you pick the SL with its letters positioned after the number denoting the engine (1990-1993) or the SL with the letters positioned before the numbers (1994-2002), any well-maintained R129 should provide a dignified driving experience. The ride can be brittle over rough pavement, but on a decent road, the car is a mobile meditation chamber, and meticulous build quality keeps squeaks and rattles to a minimum. Handling? The R129 rolls significantly on initial turn-in as you steer with the vague recirculating-ball system, but the car repays your trust with neutral mid-corner balance (the weight distribution is close to 50/50) and a sense of underlying control. Then you punch the gas and ride that splendidly smooth wave of engine power all the way to redline. You can feel the uncompromising engineering in the way the R129 moves, and this alone is worth the paltry price of admission.



THE SPECS

THIS 1998 MERCEDES-BENZ SL500

ENGINE: 5.0L DOHC 32-valve V-8 / 315 hp @ 5,600 rpm, 347 lb-ft @ 3,900 rpm
TRANSMISSION: 5-speed automatic
DRIVE: Rear-wheel
FRONT SUSPENSION: Strut-type, coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION: Multilink, coil springs
BRAKES F/R: Vented discs/discs
WEIGHT: 4,160 lb

shockingly low prices on pristine six-cylinder models.

Next up is the 500 series, which consists of two distinct 5.0-liter V-8 engines: the hand-built DOHC M119 (1990-1998) that makes 315 hp and 347 lb-ft of torque in its final incarnation and the SOHC M113 (1999-2002) that makes 302 hp and 339 lb-ft of torque. By consensus among enthusiasts at 500benz.com, the M119 is more temperamental, but its longevity is legendary. You'll see 200,000-mile specimens of this V-8 in classified ads.

Finally, there's the 600 series (1993-2002), which features the 6.0-liter M120 V-12. Essentially a pair of inline-sixes paired together, this 389-hp, 420 lb-ft monster added a few hundred pounds to the 500's already ample curb weight, so it didn't offer much of a performance improvement. From the driver's seat, however, it's a different experience from the moment you twist the key. The M120 sounds sublime, humming urgently at idle and ripping effortlessly through the midrange with a velvety intake snarl. But if you want to keep this V-12 running tip-top, you better be prepared. There's precious little space in the engine bay for hands and tools, and some independent mechanics will be reluctant to undertake major repairs for lack of experience, sentencing you to a four-figure spanking at your Mercedes dealer.

Of course, even modern Mercedes models have a hell of a time holding their value, which brings us to the sorry state of the R129 market. Today, \$10,000 gets you a well-maintained specimen of this Mercedes-Benz SL-Class with fewer than 100,000 miles, while \$15,000 procures the proverbial cream puff. That's a bummer for owners who were silly enough to think of this SL-Class as a potential investment, but it's great news for fans of world-class wheels on the cheap. If you find a R129 that hasn't been neglected and treat it with care, it should give you years of reasonably faithful service in return. Perhaps you will learn to lunch at Barney's Beanery in Santa Monica and even sell a screenplay. ■

Feature Car

1963 Chevrolet
Corvette convertible
Sold at \$55,000

S/N 30867S12163

DAYTONA BLUE OVER

dark blue vinyl interior. 250-hp, OHV, 5.4-liter V-8; three-speed manual transmission. Removable hardtop only. Correct exterior; decent chrome. Good interior with a factory AM/FM radio. Factory air-conditioning. Reported original 58,925 miles. The might-be-original paint is old, tired, and flaking, but it's part of the appeal here, as this Corvette is being marketed as a survivor.

THE STORY BEHIND THE SALE:

It would be hard to explain the importance of the 1963 model year in Detroit without focusing on three all-new models, the 1963 Buick Rivera, the 1963 Chevrolet Corvette, and the 1963 Studebaker Avanti. Where the Buick helped define the personal luxury car for a generation, the Avanti was an attempt by a small American company to make a European-style car. But it is the

second-generation Corvette that defines the American car of the 1960s. The C2 truly was all new in 1963. For the first time, the Corvette was offered as a coupe or a convertible, and the presence of air-conditioning introduced comfort features to the brand. You also had an unreal selection of engines with different power outputs, plus high-tech such as fuel injection and electronic ignition.

Complete with styling that featured hidden headlights, the 1963 Chevy Corvette made a statement about a new spirit of American sophistication, which encompassed both style and technology. This 1963 Corvette convertible is equipped with the low-horsepower V-8, no soft top, and the odd choice of a three-speed manual transmission, all of which are signs that someone wanted to buy a budget 'Vette. But

once you add air-conditioning, this car becomes an interesting collector piece. Not many 1963 Corvettes had air, and this was a time when air-conditioning in a convertible was considered by many to be folly. Was such an odd model worth the high bid? Yes, because it represents an interesting time in the history of the model. In 1963, the 10-year-old Corvette came of age.

1960
Fiat 600
Sold at \$11,000

Fiat 600, but then you can't buy a new Lexus for the cost of a weekend in

Las Vegas, right?

The charming 600 had a water-cooled engine, something of an upgrade since the 500 had an air-cooled one. Fiat made a million examples of the Fiat 600 in the car's sixth year of production and then made more. About a million performance parts were also made for the 600. It won't go any faster, but who cares? Bring on the rally stripes and Campagnolo wheels.



1950
Studebaker
Champion Starlight
Sold at \$22,000

Studebaker is among the most distinctive (some might say polarizing) of all

S/N G632593

AQUA GREEN OVER GREEN

cloth interior. 85-hp, flat-head, 2.8-liter inline-six; three-speed manual transmission. Very good paint; good chrome. The cloth interior is respectable; decent dash and gauges. A few signs of age and wear throughout, but nice enough.

The Champion was the "popular priced" model; if you wanted luxury, you opted for the Commander. The bullet-nose

postwar cars, even though the styling was meant to echo aspects of military aircraft. (The controversial propeller-style "spinner grille" appeared only in 1950-1951.) Long derided as the "coming or going" Studie with a rear window that looks like a windshield, this nevertheless bold look came from Virgil Exner, one of many famous designers who worked for the brand. Spot-on price.

S/N FIAT100769869

WHITE OVER TAN VINYL

interior. 22-hp, OHV, 0.6-liter inline-four; four-speed manual transmission. Let's call the paint condition good to very good. The glass is in good shape throughout. Contemporary-style wheels in place of originals.

Let's get real. You might not want your new Lexus to display the same indifferent paint and build quality of this 1960



1988
Jeep Grand Wagoneer
Sold at \$11,000

S/N 1JCNJ15U6JT062988

BUFF YELLOW OVER TAN

vinyl interior with cloth inserts. 140-hp, OHV, 5.9-liter V-8; three-speed automatic transmission. Decent paint, although you can find a few chips and flaws without looking too hard. Good stick-on, faux-wood plastic siding. The tan leather and cloth still look good, as do the semi-shag carpets. Nice dash, good interior trim.

Chrysler bought American Motors Corp. in March 1987 and got the troubled Jeep brand in the deal. Although few remember AMC/Rambler, Jeep lives on. The Grand Wagoneer was a moneymaker even with production at less than 20,000 examples per year, and its best years came between 1988 and 1991. Collectors are buying the Grand Wagoneer and using it as transport in places such as the Hamptons and Martha's Vineyard. Affordable at this price, and you can buy one even if your name isn't Biff, Tripp, or Buffy.



1987
Buick Grand National GNX
Sold at \$165,000

S/N 1G4GJ1170HP450730

BLACK WITH GRAY AND

black cloth interior. 300-hp, turbocharged, 3.8-liter V-6; four-speed automatic transmission. Excellent paint, trim, and glass. Just 362 miles, this is a new car in every way but age. One of 547 built.

Buick had an Indy car racing program in these years, and this tuned, turbocharged V-6 could get the GNX to 60 mph in less than 6 seconds. Sometimes it takes years for a car to become collectible. Other times it can be collectible from new. People have been watching the Buick Grand National GNX since it was first built, and more than a few were put away without any use. This is big money for a GNX but not stupid money. The new owner is expecting the value for this throwback to the 1960s will rise just like the values for classic cars of the 1960s.



1991
Jaguar XJS convertible
Sold at \$14,850

S/N SAJTW4842MC179111

BLACK OVER BLACK

leather interior. 286-hp, DOHC, 5.4-liter V-12; three-speed automatic transmission. The top shows little wear. Very good paint; the chrome is very good, as is the trim. Clean interior in all black—not all crisp but very nice.

The Jaguar XJS was in production in many forms from 1975 to 1996—including coupes and convertibles with the choice of inline-six or V-12 engines. Some 115,413 were built in total, and although the XJS was widely disdained in the beginning for poor build quality, it eventually matured into a 150-mph GT that was everything the E-type was supposed to be but never was. This V-12-powered example has a full complement of power equipment and luxury appointments, and triple black looks good on the XJS. A nice buy for its condition.



1986
Chevrolet El Camino SS
Sold at \$20,900

S/N 3GCCW80H4GS909507

WHITE OVER BLUE VINYL

interior. 140-hp, OHV, 5.0-liter V-8; three-speed automatic transmission. 48,000 miles. This is a "Designer Series" car from Choo-Choo Customs based in Chattanooga, Tennessee. (Chattanooga Choo-Choo, get it? Ask your granddad.) These were factory-authorized appearance conversions that had no performance modifications.

The El Camino is a perfect collector car; it has the driving feel of a car from its era yet it has utility that you can still appreciate. Built from 1959 to 1987, the El Camino was the longest lasting of the car-truck combos from Chevy, Crosley, Ford, Hudson, GMC, and Pontiac. The seller says this is one of 4,950 El Caminos modified by Choo-Choo Customs from 1983 to 1987. Think of it as a way to remember the 1980s, even if you don't want to. Expensive, but worth the bid.



1998
Ferrari F355 F1
Sold at \$40,700

buying a car with an information card that reads "previous salvage title"

S/N ZFFXR48B000111447

DARK BLUE OVER BLACK

leather interior. 380-hp, DOHC, 3.5-liter V-8; six-speed single-clutch automatic transmission. Very obvious repaint, as the bumper color is a few shades off the rest of the body. The interior shows wear. The overall condition of this survivor is just so-so.

Pssst. Hey buddy, want to buy a cheap Ferrari at auction? Even your mother would tell you that

should be enough to make you think hard before putting in your bid. You could buy it and spend an untold fortune to fix it up, and you'd have a fast Ferrari with shift paddles, but finding someone to buy it after all that work could be problematic. This was a lot of money to pay for a Ferrari with a bunch of questions, but some folks get lucky. And luck is what the new owner is going to need.



2004
Panoz Esperante
Sold at \$24,200

S/N 1P9PB47314B213023

SAPPHIRE BLUE METALLIC

over tan leather interior. 305-hp, DOHC, 4.6-liter V-8; five-speed automatic transmission. Very good paint; nice details and finish. Very clean interior with excellent seats and dash.

The Panoz Esperante was a Mustang-based car with a beautiful all-aluminum body that was built at a small facility in Georgia by the son of racing

entrepreneur Don Panoz. When new, the price was more than \$90,000, and

many appreciate the car's good looks as both coupe and convertible. The hand-built Ford V-8 is sharply responsive, but the live rear axle is pretty tame. Many race-oriented accessories are available. It's unique, better looking, and far better to drive than any comparable or subsequent Mustang by Ford SVT or Shelby. Sold at a no-harm-done price that seems to reflect the current market. ■

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Jason M.
Manhattan Beach, CA

A: Well Jason,

The verdict is in, and I just happen to have the perfect answer to boost you and your confidence, while giving your wife the time of her life ... repeatedly!

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the best part, every time since that night, he just keeps getting better and better. It's amazing! I can't get enough of him now!

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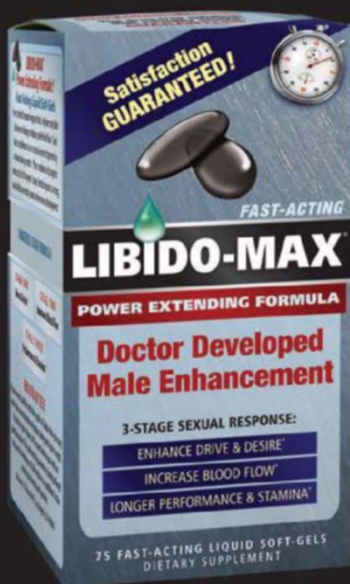
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PLAYMATE DATA SHEET

NAME: AMC Amx

ENGINE: 4.8-liter V-8/225 hp, 300 lb-ft

TRANSMISSION: 3-speed automatic LENGTH: 177.2"

HEIGHT: 51.7" WIDTH: 71.6" WHEELBASE: 97.0" WEIGHT: 3,164 lb

0-60 MPH: 8.2 sec (est) 1/4-MILE: 16.5 sec @ 85 mph (est)

TOP SPEED: 108 mph (est) BIRTH DATE: 1968

PUBLIC DEBUT: 2-15-68, Daytona International Speedway

BIRTHPLACE: Kenosha, Wisconsin

AMBITIONS: When I was born, I thought I could help AMC improve its image as a better value, steel-bodied, two-seat rival to the Corvette. American Motors Group VP Vic Raviolo even called me the "Walter Mitty Ferrari," and Hertz included me in its rent-a-racer program. But not enough people bought me.

TURN-ONS: Drag races and fast cornering. That's not an unusual combination now, but in my day, my platform was a rarity for doing both competently. I'd be even faster with the optional 390-cubic-inch V-8.

TURNOFFS: I really didn't enjoy those re-sprays as I grew older, but I think my original owner was on a budget. In retrospect it could've been worse. I mean, at least she never shot me.

FAVORITE MEN: Mark Melvin rescued me from used-car lot purgatory and sprang for this face-lift, so I love him. And then there's Roger Penske, Mark Donohue, and Ron Kaplan. The Trans-Am racing series was so long ago that I can barely remember, but I knew anyone who could give the Javelin a good reputation would be rich one day.

GUILTY PLEASURE: I like wearing chains. Well, I have to: I'm one of the few AMC survivors without four-wheel drive.



My big rear end.



What's under my bonnet?



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